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Date of Birth — Date de naissance: 18. 11. 58

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance: GREAT BRITAIN

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe: 16 SOUTH CLOSE, BARNET, HERTS, ENGLAND EN5 5TP

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse: SPORT AND WAR IN THE BRITISH LITERATURE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1918

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Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse: GERALD REDMOND (PROF.)

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SPORT AND WAR IN THE BRITISH LITERATURE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1918

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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Gerald Redmond

Supervisor

P. Lawson

Date 24.08.84.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of Private Arthur Wilson Veitch
and Private Donald Veitch, 7th. Battalion, ANZAC.

Unknown warriors related to me in name alone,
killed in action on the beaches of Gallipoli
25 April 1915, their bodies now lying in unmarked graves
somewhere on that sorrowful peninsula.

ABSTRACT

The study of the relationship between sport and the First World War in Britain has received little attention from social historians. All too often scholars have adopted the years of 1914 and 1918 as convenient points at which to curtail or commence their research, thereby consigning the war years to an undeserved obscurity. Those studies which have considered the fate and/or the influence of sport during the First World War have dealt largely with the responses of the British educational and social elite during this turbulent period. This study is intended to go some way towards redressing this imbalance in the literature of sport and the First World War.

Attention within the study is directed at first to an identification of the various factors which caused success in sport to be equated with success in battle in post-Crimean Victorian Britain. Consideration is given to factors which stem from educational, military, social and sporting environments, all of which contributed to the popular notion that the British sportsman was inherently a strong and courageous warrior at the onset of war in Europe in 1914. Using a model constructed to reflect the wide range of British literature being published during the war years, the main body of the study examines the interrelationship between sport and the national war effort between 1914 and 1918. Three major areas are highlighted: firstly, the use of sporting imagery and ideology in the form of propaganda directed at the British population during the war; secondly, the role of sport in relation to the army's recruiting drive prior to the imposition of compulsory conscription in Britain; and thirdly, an examination of the genre of 'athletic war poetry' which emerged during the course of the war.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the valuable assistance and advice offered freely and unselfishly by a number of people. To those cited here, and others acknowledged in the main body of the text, I offer my thanks:

To my committee members, Dr. Phil Lawson and Dr. Ted Wall, for their continual support, encouragement, guidance and friendship during my stay at the University of Alberta.

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My appreciation is extended to the members of my family, Eileen, Tom and Nick Veitch, who so selflessly encouraged me to pursue my studies in Canada. Their love and understanding has been unceasing, and without their generous moral, financial and practical support, completion of this study would not have been possible.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

7:30 a.m., 1 July 1916. Along an 18 mile front in Picardy the first attack line of the British Fourth Army, more than 500,000 men all-told, crouched in their trenches. Laden with equipment, they awaited the signal to clamber out over the parapet and begin their advance across no-man's land to occupy the shattered German lines. A seven day bombardment had pounded the Germans with more than 1,500,000 shells; nine high explosive mines, tunneled deep beneath their positions, had exploded between 7:20 and 7:28 a.m., hurling enormous clouds of earth and smoke 4000' into the air. Little opposition was anticipated. As the officers' whistles shrilled, a soldier in the Montauban sector noted:-

> As the gun-fire died away I saw an infantry man climb onto the parapet into No-Man's Land, beckoning others to follow. As he did so he kicked off a football; a good kick, the ball rose and travelled well towards the German line. That seemed to be the signal to advance.[1]

Thus began the blackest day in the entire history of the British Army. By night-fall, 57,470 casualties had been sustained. 19,240 officers and men were dead.

No exact total of the dead from the Great War will ever be recorded, but it is unofficially set at between ten and thirteen million for all those nations involved.[2] The Commonwealth War Graves Commission list the total number of deaths for the Empire forces as 1,114,786.[3] In the most costly engagements of the war, during the 1918 German offensive at Picardy and Lys, British forces were sustaining casualties at the rate of 5,846 an hour.

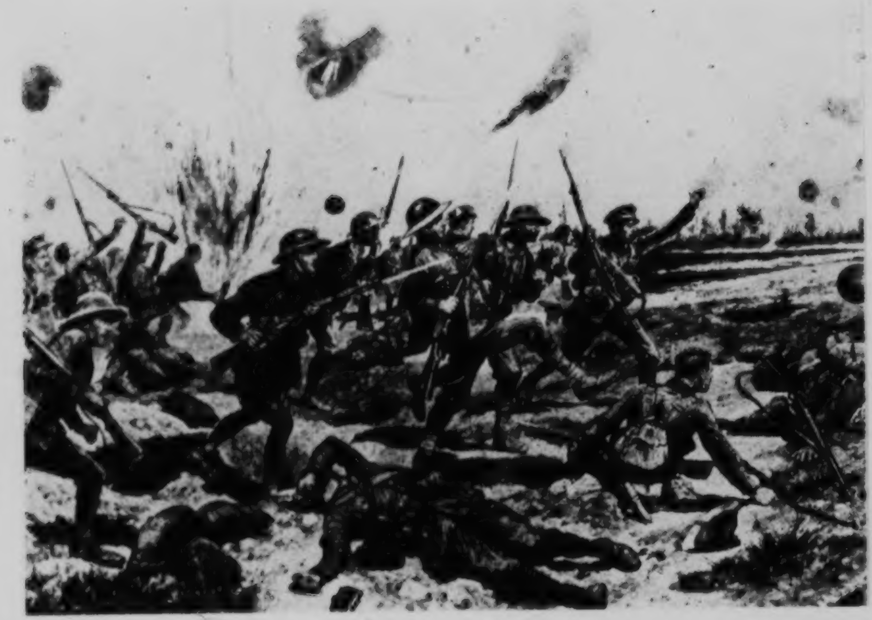
---

[1] Pte. L.S.Price, 8th.Royal Sussex, in M.Middlebrook, The First Day On The Somme (New York: W.W.Norton & Co., 1972), p.124.

[2] J.Terraine, The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861-1945 (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), p.37.

[3] Terraine, p.44.

Plate I



Captain Nevill's East Surreys attack at Montauban, 1 July 1916.

In comparison, the 'natural wastage' of troops that occured on both sides of the Western Front on an 'average day' where no major assaults were timetabled was 2,533 killed, 9,121 wounded and 1,164 missing.[4] It was, however, the Battle of the Somme, billed as the first hammer blow of Haig's 'Great Push' that would end the war, which has carved itself a bloody epitaph as the nadir of the British wartime experience. In this respect, the appearance of a football on the battlefield at zero hour would seem to be not only unlikely, but positively inconceivable; for what possible relationship could there be between sport and the monumental slaughter of that fateful July morning? A cursory examination of British life and leisure in the years preceding the war quickly provides something of an answer to this question.

Sports and games had increased in popularity beyond measure between 1890 and 1914, building upon the foundations of modern sport which had been laid in the late nineteenth century.[5] For many, sport had become Britain's universal panacea - the means by which one could cultivate not only a healthy body, but a healthy mind as well. More than this, sports and games were widely believed to develop in the young player a variety of character traits that were deemed beneficial for taking his place in society - loyalty, obedience, courage, moral strength, the capacity for leadership and a sense of fair play. The systematised use of games to achieve this character transformation in the young boy and adolescent emerged in the British public schools in the mid-nineteenth century, and, despite opposition, flourished under the epithets of athleticism, Muscular Christianity, or the Games Cult.[6] The applicability of such character traits to military life was not overlooked, and by the outbreak of war in 1914, sport was held by many to be the one common element in the British national character that would ensure victory over the enemies of the Empire. Sport would train recruits, rear successful officers, rejuvenate weary soldiers and ultimately help kill Germans. In distinct contrast to our own age, where sport is often characterised as surrogate warfare, and written about in the language of battle,[7] the 1914-1918 war was perceived to have considerable connections with sport, and the language of sport - particularly team games - was a commonly-used metaphor for the passage and progress of war. Despite the proliferation of primary evidence pertaining to sport in the context of battle, a thorough examination of the relationship between sport, the First World War and British literature has yet to be written. This study will attempt in part to fill that void.

---

[4] W.Manchester, The Last Lion. Winston Spencer Churchill, Visions of Glory 1874 - 1932 (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1983), p.508.

[5] "During that twenty-five years, sport moved into a new era. It exercised men's minds and bodies to an unprecedented extent. From 1890-1914, sport grew to a peak of importance from which there has been no retreat." B.Dobbs, Edwardians at Play. Sport 1890 - 1914. (London: Pelham Books, 1973), p.18.

[6] P.McIntosh makes reference to all three of these terms in Physical Education in England Since 1800 (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1968), pp.44, 55 and 67.

Educational, social, military, and sports historians have, to a varying degree, made reference to sports, games, or physical education during the First World War. In the majority of cases their comments are cosmetic; in some, misleading. All but the few fail to do justice to what is undoubtedly a complex and convoluted social phenomenon. Even these few, by the nature of their self-imposed limitations, cannot present the entire picture. None of them call expressly for further research into the area. This in itself is sufficient to awaken interest and prompt a fuller survey of the literature. Certain statements regarding the role of sport in the British response to the war are undoubtedly perpetuating what soldier-writer Sydney Rogerson has called "the-grim-smiling-faces-of-undaunted-boys' war of the early correspondents with attacking battalions dribbling footballs across a sporting No-Man's Land".[8] Just as he and Terraine urge the military historian to escape this view of the war - "to blow away the smoke and get at the fire..."[9] - so there is a need for a similar approach to be adopted by sports historians. Accordingly, this study will follow the blueprint outlined by Terraine who, after twenty years of studying, lecturing and writing on the topic of the First World War, concluded that although the First World War was unquestionably a major watershed in British history, it was necessary to arrive at a thorough understanding of it by pushing aside all the mythology, "no matter how seemingly authoritative".[10] It is believed that such a forthright and intuitive approach to the subject matter supported by new evidence will lead to a more accurate understanding of the relationship between sport and physical education, modern warfare, and the people of Great Britain between 1914 and 1918.

---

[7] See, for example, Philip Goodhart and Christopher Chataway, War Without Weapons (London: W.H.Allen, 1968), chapter six, "A Kind of Warfare".
[8] Terraine, p.13.
[9] Terraine, p.14.
[10] Terraine, p.14.

The study will proceed under the following hypotheses: firstly, that research in the area of sport and the First World War to date has been almost entirely concentrated upon the attitudes, opinions and responses of a highly-educated minority in Britain, namely the pupils and Old Boys of the British public schools. Secondly, that much of the contemporary literature of the First World War relating to sport was written by this highly vocal minority. Thus an artificial and misrepresentative picture regarding the role of sport during the years of the Great War was first cultivated by those who lived and died within its confines. This legacy has since survived, and has been continually portrayed as a generalised and all-embracing truth. Finally, that there exists a body of literature written by, for and about non-public schoolboys that is of equal importance in the construction of a valid account of sport and the First World War, but has been widely overlooked. Accordingly, this study will apply itself to answering as fully as possible the following question: ***What was the relationship between sport and war as portrayed by British literature between 1914 and 1918?***

In answering the question, further queries will be posed: why were sport and war equated *at all* in the modern world of the twentieth century? How did the public school values attached to sports and games gain ascendency in British society both before and during the war? What were the purposes of utilising sport in the literature of the Great War, and how were sport and war seen to correlate?

Time, and the accessibility of primary materials are the major limitations of this study. It is beyond the author's abilities to read, assimilate and analyse the enormous volume of material published during the war years within the designated time frame for this study. Some of the desired publications are not immediately within the grasp of the researcher. Whilst efforts have been made to compensate for their absence, their ommission may inhibit some of the conclusions that can be drawn from the research.

The majority of the literature under consideration in the study will be that published in Britain between the years of 1914 and 1918. The study will concentrate on the interrelationship of sport and physical education with the preparation and progress of the British Armies on the Western Front - the 590 mile-long line of trenches stretching unbroken from the English Channel to the Franco-Swiss border. Neither the Royal Navy, nor the Royal Flying Corps will receive anything other than incidental mention. Though neither sport nor war are exclusively male preserves, the study will focus upon male team games and physical education, and the image of the male soldier at war. It is fully intended, however, that female representations of both which appear in the contemporary literature will be utilised in the research.

There exists no universal methodology of history, nor can historical knowledge be comfortably arrived at by the imposition of tried and tested laws. The historian must gain understanding by the view of the past afforded him/her by the evidence that is consulted. As Tuchman notes, the historian discovers that historical truth is "subjective and separate, made up of little bits seen, experienced and recorded by different people". The historian's ultimate aim, therefore - to see things as they really were - is never wholly within his/her grasp. It is this striving continually for the unattainable which is the very essence of historical research.[11]

Park has appealed for sports history research to turn greater attention to more comprehensive and broader-reaching studies which focus wider social, cultural and intellectual perspectives on the events of the past.[12] She concludes this appeal by stating, "More interpretive, analytical and extensive narrative histories of sport need to be undertaken."[13] This study will attempt to respond to this call. Its subject matter will indeed require a broader cultural and intellectual analysis to be made, and necessitates the synthesis of information gained from a number of academic spheres : language and literature, sociology, politics, anthropology, as well as history. In its treatment of the data, the study will unite the three-pronged approach called for by Park. It will *narrate* by providing a clear background to the study being undertaken, both thematically and chronologically. It will *interpret* by subsequently linking previously unconnected incidents in logical and supported argument, and by placing its findings in the context of the social, intellectual and political framework prevalent in Britain during the time frame of the study. Finally, it will also *analyse*, using a model constructed to provide a representative sample of sources, and by subjecting the gathered data to several quantifications, from which some objective results may be drawn. These three approaches have been conveniently distinguished here. During the course of the study they will often be interlinked and inseparable. Not to adopt one of these techniques will be to fall short of the historian's objective - to provide the fullest possible picture of the past as revealed by the evidence available.

---

[11] Barbara Tuchman, The Guns of August (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), p.491.
[12] R.Park, "The Use of Hypotheses in Sports History", Sports History Research Methodology, Proceedings of a Workshop held at the University of Alberta, 28 May - 1 June 1980, pp.25-36.
[13] Park, p.27.

Following initial readings, a model has been formulated to encompass an analysis of the vast body of literature written during the years of the First World War. Whilst not exhaustive, it is believed that the categories of literature established provide widespread coverage of British literary output between 1914 and 1918. They are as follows:

Literary, or periodical magazines: Those periodicals whose attention was primarily concerned with intellectual and current affairs. All the journals cited were reviewed from June of 1914 to December of 1918 for relevant material. Those selected were: *The English Review, Cornhill Magazine, Edinborough Review, Everyman Magazine, Chambers's Journal, Contemporary Review, Fortnightly Review, Blackwood's Magazine, The Nineteenth Century.*

War Periodicals: Those magazines which emerged as a direct consequence of the outbreak of war. *The War Illustrated* was published weekly throughout the war, intended as a topical news-sheet to keep the public informed as to the progress of the conflict. *The Great War* and *The Times History of the First World War* were both published in installments, and were intended as the first definitive histories of the war.

Military Publications: *Sapper* magazine, the journal/newsletter of the Royal Engineers has been researched for the years 1914-1918. Further military material, such as training manuals, pamphlets, and the publications of those serving in the British Army will supplement this section.

Juvenile Literature: Access has been gained to *Chums; A Paper for Boys* for the volumes published between 1914 and 1918. A number of schoolboy and adolescent novels will be used to develop this area of research.

Daily Newspapers: *The Times*, together with its subsiduary addendums, the *Literary Supplement* and the *Educational Supplement* have all been researched for the years under investigation.

War Poetry: More than 140 volumes of war poetry have been examined for material pertinent to this study, drawn from the excellent special collection of the genre held by the University of Alberta.

War Prose: Essays, treatises and sermons written and published during the war years in Britain.

War Fiction: A selection from the vast number of novels and short stories published between 1914 and 1918 will be analysed, and their contents related in this section.

The evidence resulting from this model will be synthesised with that body of knowledge already determined by leading researchers in the field. The expectations are that a well-documented and thorough review will emerge of the interrelationship between sport, British society and the First World War, as depicted in the literature published in Britain between 1914 and 1918.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Secondary materials which concern themselves to any degree with facets of sport or physical education in the First World War are comparatively few, and largely fall into three categories: those which cite the footballing incident on the Somme as if it were a representative view of sport prevalent in Britain at that time; those who make passing reference to other aspects of sport within their accounts of the war; and those who have pursued the analagous nature of sport a great deal further, and have attempted to present insight based on supportive evidence and rational analysis.

Straddling the first two categories is Martin Middlebrook's excellent The First Day On The Somme. The author, a Lincolnshire farmer, was sufficiently moved by a visit to the war cemeteries of the Somme in the late 1960s to want to discover more about the fate of the young volunteers of 'Kitchener's Armies' who went to their deaths there on 1 July 1916. In what has been described as "a truly heroic effort of historical fieldwork"[1], Middlebrook found and interviewed 546 survivors of the battle, from whose eyewitness accounts he compiled his book. The account of Captain Nevill offering a prize to the first of his platoons which succeeded in kicking a football up to the German trenches on the morning of the attack forms one of the many threads of the work. His account is very well researched. He records not only the location of Nevill's grave, for the officer was killed only moments after his heroic kick-off, but also the fact that two of the footballs were recovered and are housed in military museums in England.[2] His final contribution to the legend is the revelation that one platoon had painted the following inscription on their ball :

---

[1] J.Keegan, The Face of Battle (London: Penguin Books, 1983), p.262.
[2] Middlebrook, p.124.

The Great European Cup
The Final
East Surreys v Bavarians
Kick Off at Zero

William Manchester reiterates the significance of Nevill's act in his acclaimed biography of Winston Churchill; although for some reason he dates the footballing incident as being 11 July rather than the 1st. Manchester records that the deaths of Nevill and many of his men during the assault inspired an elegy, from which he reproduces the following stanza:

> On through the heat of slaughter
> Where gallant comrades fall
> Where blood is poured like water
> They drive the trickling ball
> The fear of death before them
> Is but an empty name
> True to the land that bore them
> The Surreys play the game.[3]

Manchester concludes this section of his work somewhat rhetorically: "What *game*, in the name of God, were the Surreys playing? Ah, but they knew, and that was enough for them."[4]

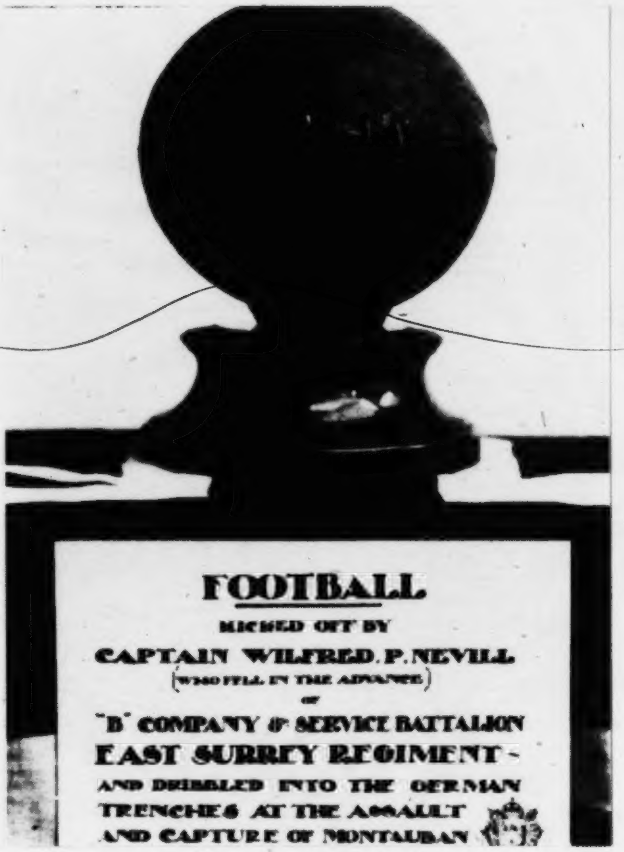
The gallant sporting actions of Nevill and the East Surreys are given further reinforcement by Paul Fussell, who attempts to place them in some historical perspective :

> One way of showing the sporting spirit was to kick a football toward the enemy lines while attacking. This feat was first performed by the 1st. Battalion of the 18th. London Regiment at Loos in 1915. It soon achieved the status of a conventional act of bravado and was ultimately exported far beyond the Western Front. Arthur ("Bosky") Borton, who took part in an attack on the Turkish lines near Beersheba in November, 1917, proudly reported home "One of the men had a football. How it came there goodness knows. Anyway we kicked off and rushed the first [Turkish] guns, dribbling the ball with us."[5]

---

[3] Manchester, p.659.
[4] Manchester, p.659.
[5] Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford : O.U.P., 1981), p.27.

Plate II


FOOTBALL
KICKED OFF BY
CAPTAIN WILFRED. P. NEVILL.
(WHO FELL IN THE ADVANCE)
OF
"B" COMPANY 8th SERVICE BATTALION
EAST SURREY REGIMENT -
AND DRIBBLED INTO THE GERMAN
TRENCHES AT THE ASSAULT
AND CAPTURE OF MONTAUBAN

Picture postcard of a football recovered from the East Surreys' attack at Montauban.

Fussell elaborates further on the Nevill incident, revealing that the Captain had purchased four footballs on his last leave in London, and was known by one of his contemporaries as "the battalion buffoon". Fussell also reveals that the elegiac lines written in praise of the East Surreys appear on the border of an undated field concert program, now preserved in the Imperial War Museum, under the title "The Game". The author of the poem gives his identity only as 'Touchstone'.[6] Though his comments on the sport and war debate do extend beyond the Nevill incident, it is the footballing episode which once again predominates, and is presented as the symbol of the British sporting approach to war.

The Loos incident referred to in Fussell's work is confirmed by the eyewitness account of Patrick MacGill of the London Irish Battalion, who recorded as he fell wounded in the assault: "Were the men wavering? No fear! The boys on the right were dribbling the elusive football towards the German trench".[7]

Both Winter and Terraine make reference to what were certainly the most unusual games of football played during the war - those which took place in no-man's land between the British and German troops during an impromptu and unofficial truce that took place on several sectors of the Western Front on Christmas Day, 1914. Terraine's account is potentially the most informative, but he, like Winter, fails to reference his sources, despite quoting freely from them.[8]

A number of authors make reference to sport in other arenas of the war. Caffrey refers to the "deep rooted worship of sports and games" possessed by the long-service volunteers who comprised the British Expeditionary Force as being one of their "cardinal qualities".[9]

---

[6] Fussell, p.27; this pseudonym is revealed by recent research to be that of Claude Edward Cole Hamilton, a journalist for both *The Daily Mail* and *The Evening News* - Catherine W.Reilly, English Poetry of the First World War: A Bibliography (London: George Prior, 1978), pp.75-76.

[7] Guy Chapman, ed., Vain Glory. A Miscellany of the Great War 1914 - 1918 (London: Cassell, 1968), pp.192-4.

[8] John Terraine, "Christmas 1914, and After", *History Today*, vol.29 (December 1979), 781-789; D.Winter, "Time Off From Conflict: Christmas 1914", *Journal of the United Services Institute*, vol.115, no.660 (1970), 42-43.

[9] Kate Caffrey, Farewell, Leicester Square. The Old Contemptibles 12 August - 19 November

This claim remains unsubstantiated throughout the work. Baker contrasts the days of "sunshine and shadow" during the Great War, where the excellence of sport was punctuated with the horrific excesses of war.[10] He provides an overview of the mood which possessed the Western nations during the war years, drawing particularly upon the American response to the crisis. He reinforces the British bond between sport and the war by citing Lord Derby's words to the two teams at the 1915 "Khaki Final", as he presented the F.A. Cup to the victors: "You have played with one another and against one another for the Cup, play with one another for England now."[11] Pound concentrates on the wasted talents of the nation's youth in The Lost Generation, in which he focuses on those better-educated and upper-class personalities who met their deaths whilst under arms as volunteers between 1914 and 1916.[12] His approach, which combines obituary with social history, is the source of considerable biographical information about such notable sporting figures as Anthony Wilding, the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Champion; the Grenfell brothers, Julian and Billy; G.R.L."Twiggy" Anderson, the Olympic hurdler, and many other public school sportsmen-soldiers, whose names will become more prominent as this study proceeds.

John Keegan provides another acclaimed account of the the first day of the battle of the Somme, but unlike that of Middlebrook, he allows his narrative to deviate sufficiently to encompass several informative statements regarding the British sporting rationale during the war. He mentions, but does not dwell upon, another incident in which soldiers went 'over the top' following a football, this one kicked by "a well known North Country player".[13] There can be no confusion here with the East Surreys' attack, for this particular incident occurred amongst the ranks of the 16th. Northumberland Fusiliers (Newcastle Commercials) who saw their action around Thiepval with the 32nd. Division, some 8 or 9 miles away from the East

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[9](cont'd)1914. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980), p.27.
[10] William Baker, Sports in the Western World. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1982).
[11] Baker, p.207. This statement by Lord Derby finds many other outlets, including Tony Mason's Association Football and English Society 1863-1915 (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).
[12] R.Pound, The Lost Generation (London: Constable, 1964).
[13] Keegan, p.250.

Surreys at Montauban. Keegan's contribution, however, extends beyond this and into a thoughtful discussion of the "too well-worn" *cliches* of the 'Lost Generation' and the 'Public School Officer'[14] This section of his work will be discussed at a later stage in this study.

Brian Dobb's Edwardians at Play. Sport 1890-1914 covers in its opening chapter many of the themes and strands of this convoluted association between sports and war. Like Fussell, he turns to Henry Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* as the ultimate pre-war expression of sport's inter-relationship with battle. Dobbs points to the philosophy of character training through sports and games within British public schools, reviewing its proponents' belief that:

> The games and especially the moral virtues with which they were now surrounded corresponded roughly with what was required in the outside world. In wars against hostile tribes who lacked weapons and organisation; dash, daring, loyalty, courage, and endurance, all of them fostered on the field of play, were at a premium.[15]

Symbolised by the Newboltian phrase "Play up! Play up! and play the game!", Dobbs takes the transference process to its inevitable conclusion. That sport and war could be related in this fashion was "a seductive philosophy. The straight bat denoted the officer and gentleman. The three-quarter dash could be a prelude to a bayonet charge, and the forward dribble an overture to a combined assault on an enemy position".[16] Nevertheless, despite providing some further evidence, the author maintains that though this philosophy was exercising considerable influence, the actual links between sport and war had at best been tenuous, and following the Boer war there was less and less connection between the two. In contrast to his conclusions, however, the Edwardian period prior to the war is characterised by an ever-increasing stress being placed upon "the crucial importance of sport, sporting success, and sporting conduct".[17] Alongside these perceptive comments, Dobbs makes mention of what is now the fifth incident of its type to come to light in this study when he mentions the death of England Rugby International E.R.Mobbs, who led his men in a charge towards the German wire by kicking a rugby ball into the air and rushing after it.

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[14] Keegan, p.277.
[15] Dobbs, p.25.
[16] Dobbs, p.26.
[17] Dobbs, p.26.

McIntosh provides the only overview of sport and physical education in Great Britain between 1914 and 1918 in his chapter "The Great War and the Fisher Education Act".[18] In a concise review of educational policy during the war years, McIntosh escapes the public schoolboy image of war proferred by so many of the authors reviewed in this section, and contributes valuable evidence on the resistance to the imposition of military drill in British state secondary schools. The widespread adoption of the Ling Swedish system of gymnastics in the schools, the training of instructors, and the increasing influence of women in the field of physical education during the war are all crucial topics addressed by the author which lend his account a balance undetected in many of the other sources consulted.

Alongside McIntosh stand two other works which have adopted admirable analytical approaches towards their subject matter. Though both concentrate on middle- and upper-class responses to the war, they have refused to be content with the narration of unsubstantiated maxims. Instead, each author views the phenomenon of war-as-sport in its relationship to two powerful and often overlapping Victorian and Edwardian social forces - chivalry, and athleticism.

Girouard's The Return to Camelot traces the influence of the medieval code of chivalry on Victorian and Edwardian British society.[19] Amongst its many manifestations, Girouard gives considerable attention to the chivalric values surrounding sports and games. One essential element of games playing was that it was held to prepare the participant admirably for warfare - a conflict which would, the adherents believed, be bound by a similar knightly code of noble and sporting conduct. The author cites several fine examples of this belief embodied in the elegiac poetry of the 1914-1918 period, one of which commemorates the honour of the fallen in quasi-religious cricketing terminology :

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[18] P.C.McIntosh, P.E. in England, pp.180-206.

[19] Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

> For when the One Great Scorer comes
> To write against your name
> He marks - not that you won or lost
> But how you played the game.[20]

The most direct, thorough and enlightening investigation of the application of public school sport to the First World War comes from Mangan's recent work. In his section on the rhetoric of games, Mangan analyses the relationship between sport and war as exhibited by six leading public schools in Britain. His findings reinforce his hypothesis that one essential component of athleticism was the belief that it could propagate and foster through games not only patriotism, but military competence. Though he concludes, "The simple and foolish image of public schoolboys as sportsmen-soldiers is a recurring one in the literature of the schools", the author is careful to explain *why* this occurred, and not merely condemn it as ridiculous, or alternatively offer it as a model of universal British response during the war. In many respects, Mangan's work is currently the touchstone for an understanding of public school athleticism and its place in the First World War.[21] The material which he brings to light in his study will be returned to at a later stage in this work, where it can be used to supplement findings from the literature search described earlier in this chapter.

From this review of the existing literature relating to the subject of sport and the First World War, it can be seen that there remains a considerable amount of research to be done before an adequate overview can be postulated. This being the case, this study will attempt to rise to this challenge, and in the following chapters will proffer a wider analysis of the perceived role of sport in the eyes of British society during the First World War.

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[20] N.L.Jackson, Sporting Days and Sporting Ways (1932), in Girouard, p.235.
[21] J.A.Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School. The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology (Cambridge : C.U.P., 1981).

Chapter III

FROM SEBASTOPOL TO SPION KOP: THE EMERGENCE, EDUCATION AND MILITARY RECREATION OF TOM BROWN AND TOMMY ATKINS, 1854-1900.

The years immediately following the Treaty of Paris in 1856 are in many ways central to an understanding of the relationship between sport and the First World War. In this influential sixty years period, major changes and shifts of emphasis occurred in the arenas of education, politics, literature, sport, philosophy and religion that would help shape the nation's response to the Great War of 1914-18. Accordingly, this chapter will address itself to those areas of Victorian society which impinge directly upon the central subject matter of this study. It will adopt a three-tiered approach, investigating the role of the public schools in identifying and synthesising common elements of sport and warfare in the nineteenth century, the education of the lower, or working classes of the nation, to discover any links here between sport and warfare, and thirdly, a review of the state of the army between the end of the Crimean War and the onset of hostilities in the Second South African War, paying particular attention to its adoption and valuation of sport and physical training.

As the title suggests, this chapter will introduce two characters who won the admiration of all true Britons during the nineteenth century, and who were destined to carry their stereotyped image all the way into the First World War. 'Thomas Atkins' became the identity tag for Britain's 'unknown soldier' after the Duke of Wellington had immortalised him following the battle of Waterloo. Congratulating his brave troops after the victory, the Duke came across a mortally-wounded private in one of his regiments, who was close to death. Seeing the pity in the Duke's eyes, the soldier is reputed to have said "Never mind, Sir, it is all in the day's work". That private's name was Thomas Atkins, and British soldiers hence have become known by friends and enemies alike as 'Tommies'.[1] Tom Brown was Hughes' refreshing character creation in his hugely successful and influential novel of life in the 1830s at Rugby public school.[2] His name, too, became adopted as representative of all those worthy character traits that ought to be possessed by the young public schoolboy-sportsman. Both characters had their own distinct nineteenth century universes. Both were destined to be celebrated by name or by deed in the ensuing World War of the twentieth century. As such, they are both eminently important as representatives of their respective classes, schools, sports and ranks. With this in mind, these two bastions of British romantic patriotism will assist in broaching an answer to that question raised in the introduction - why were sports and war related *at all* in the modern British society of the twentieth century?

The opening decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed something of a transformation in educational circles in Britain, as the financially ascendant middle-classes strove to match their growing intrusion into the political power circles of the nation with entry into the elite social circles of their peers.[3] Whilst their newly-acquired wealth could not buy them aristocratic heritage, it *could* procure their sons a place at those seats of learning at which the upper classes educated their own male heirs - the public schools. Efforts to define these institutions are fraught with complications. Originally founded to offer education to promising scholars from poor families, they had, by the nineteenth century, been usurped by the fee-paying offspring of the aristocracy and landed gentry. In this regard there is some element of accuracy in Sydney Smith's description of these schools being "an endowed place of education of old standing to which the sons of gentlemen resort in considerable numbers and where they continue to reside from eight to eighteen years of age".[4] However, Baker's loquacious description has an advantageous accuracy afforded by hindsight, and is perhaps more revealing :

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[1] *T.P.'s Weekly*, vol.24, no.620 (26 September 1914), p.362.
[2] Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays (London: Macmillan, 1856).
[3] Janet Roebuck, The Making of Modern English Society from 1850 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p.40.
[4] Sydney Smith, "Remarks on the System of Education in Public Schools", *Edinburgh Review*, vol.16 (August 1810), p.326, in P.McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.16.

> ...called 'public schools' because they had originally been founded in the distant past as charitable institutions for the education of bright but poor boys, these schools...were anything but public. Rich parents happily paid large sums to have their sons exposed to the niceties of Latin and Greek, the advantages of useful connections, and the possibilities of maturation in a loosely structured environment. Life at the public schools was coarse and often brutal. Discipline was lax. Boys mostly governed themselves by means of their own pecking order of authority: older boys bullied newcomers mercilessly.[5]

Despite this state of affairs within the schools, the demand for residential education at just such an institution continued to increase. Not all socially ambitious parents, however, could afford to pay the fees for their boys to attend one of the nine 'great' public schools.[6] For these people, a swift alternative was necessary. A variety of facsimile institutions was the prompt remedy to the demand. Though differing in constitution and origin in many cases, these so-called 'proprietory' schools often emulated the outward trappings of public school life, and keenly embraced those values held up as admirable by their betters.[7] Under the firm and forthright leadership of headmasters, many of whom had been directly influenced by Arnold's widely-commended blend of religion and educational morality, many of these schools grew to match, and even rival, the original nine in reputation and popularity. Whilst these 'lesser' public schools wilfully adopted the traditional trade-marks of a public school framework - admitting fee-paying boarders, encouraging self-government amongst the boys, and basing the curriculum firmly around the classics - nowhere were the great public school practices more eagerly adopted than on the games pitches and the playing fields.

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[5] W.J.Baker, Sports in the Western World, p.120.

[6] These were the seven boarding and two day schools examined by the Clarendon Commission between 1861-64, and are: Eton, Winchester, Harrow, Westminster, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Charterhouse, St.Paul's and Merchant Taylor's.

[7] For a more detailed breakdown of the individual nature and origin of these schools, see J. de S.Honey's Tom Brown's Universe. The Development of the English Public School in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Quadrangle, 1977), chapters one & two.

Games were by no means new to the Victorian public schools - a cricket score exists for a Winchester school match from as early as 1746, and other evidence records that football, rowing, hunting and other less savoury (and often illegal) activities were all frequent pastimes of the public schoolboy well before the 1850s.[8] The dramatic upsurge in games at the schools during the 1850s and 60s, then, was not due to their novelty, but to their new acceptibility in the eyes of those in charge of the schools. The realisation dawned amongst masters and headmasters of the Victorian public schools that games could be used to not only gain control over their often unruly charges, but also as a tool by which boys could be groomed for citizenship and public service. The training and development of the young boy's character in order to befit him to accede to his advantageous place in society had always been an aim of the schools, but gradually, under the inspired leadership of such notable headmasters as Temple, Cotton, Thring, Vaughan and Almond, games were incorporated into the schools' curriculum for moral and educational purposes.[9] Admirable character, manliness, and preparation for the sterner challenges of life beyond school bounds were now to be accomplished not only by bullying and the traditional thrashing, but by experiencing and enduring the hard knocks and good lessons that came from a wholesome and manly game of football or cricket. Rugged in practice and didactic in purpose, such additions to the school curriculum won approval from both educators and pupils alike.[10] By placing the organisational aspect of games firmly within the control of the boys, but cultivating and encouraging participation through the employment of athletically competent masters, the public schools and their imitators believed that their pupils were drawing maximum benefits from this new educational approach. Termed variously 'muscular Christianity', the 'games cult', or 'athleticism', this ideology permeated British society throughout the nineteenth century, enforcing the simple linear equation 'games build character'.[11] Such was the influence of games within the schools by 1864 that the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the state of public school education paid them considerable attention, and was able to express considerable satisfaction that :

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[8] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.22-25.

[9] A detailed review of the role of games in the educational thinking of the latter four men constitutes a central part of Mangan's work, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School.

[10] Mangan has shown that athleticism progressed at different rates amongst the schools within his study, but that the overall trend was one of increasing acceptence of the new ideology. Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, ***passim***.

> ...the cricket and football fields are not merely places of exercise or amusement; they help to form some of the most valuable social qualities and manly virtues and they hold...a distinct and important place in Public School Education.[12]

The report continued with the accolade that the schools' "love of healthy sports and exercise" was one of their major contributions to the formation of excellent English national character.[13] Thus within a brief formative period, the playing field had altered from a place of idle recreation and largely purposeless pastime to an arena in which life's major lessons could be learned. Whether in the scrummages on Rugby's Big Side, or batting on the Upper at Uppingham, dribbling the ball along the covered cloisters of Charterhouse and Westminster, facing up to the bowling on Harrow's Hill, or stopping a forward rush on Loretto's Pinkie Mains, the young public schoolboy was developing his character to face the trials of the 'greater game' of life. Team sports taught loyalty, consideration and selflessness whilst simultaneously generating courage, strength and pluck. Self-government of the games by the boys encouraged responsibility and facilitated their abilities to both lead by example and obey with deference. Regulation of the sports brought with it an appreciation for order, good form and fair play. Above all, the game was to be played to the utmost of one's abilities - winning was to be accepted with humility, and defeat with an unembittered integrity. At all times, the player was to behove his status as a 'gentleman'. These were the essential elements that were believed to accrue from participation in team games at the public schools. Significantly, these characteristics were held to mould the boy for later life, fostering patriotism, and preparing him for any moral or military battles he may have to face. Together, they will be taken to comprise the ideology of athleticism for the purposes of this study.[14]

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[11] It is not the intention of this study to enter into a lengthy debate upon the subtle differences and nuances that make each one of these terms unique, rather than synonymous. For the purposes of this study, the term 'athleticism' will be prefered, and will be defined a little later in this chapter.

[12] Report of Royal Commission on Public Schools, 1864, p.40, in J.G.Dixon et al, Landmarks in the History of Physical Education (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p.178.

[13] Quoted in McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.49 .

Without doubt, the playing fields of British schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century were viewed as training grounds for the battlefields of the Empire. This is attested to by a wealth of primary source material brought to light by some leading researchers in the field, and the ideological transfer has been encapsulated and explained by Geoffrey Best in terms of the educational theory of sport. He notes that the team spirit encouraged in games developed a feeling of corporate membership, loyalty and devotion which, in turn, matured naturally and easily into training for the ultimate team - your country's army fighting for national survival. Best points out that the "...loyalty syndrome which was such a prodigious part of the public school ethos began with loyalty to your house ...and rose through loyalty to your school (a paradigm of the nation) to loyalty to your country, faith and leaders".[15] A number of other incidents in these most formative years aided and abetted the growth of a military component to athleticism. In the literary world, Thomas Hughes' enormously influential Tom Brown's Schooldays was an early advocate of what was to become an increasingly popular career route - from 'swell' to subaltern in the garrisons of the expanding British Empire. On being asked for news of his friend Harry East, Tom replies

"...I had a letter from him in February just before he started to join his

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[14] This definition was constructed after reference to two other similar attempts: that of J.A.Mangan in his Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, and that of G.Redmond in "The Gospel in the Colony. 'Muscular Christianity' in Nineteenth Century Canada", Proceedings of the IX International H.I.S.P.A. Congress, Lisbon, 1981, p.259. Redmond reviews and categorises the responses of some of the opponents to the 'games build character' movement in "Alarm, Amusement and Contempt: Early English Critics of Muscular Christianity", a paper presented at the N.A.S.S.H. Annual Convention, McMaster University, Hamilton, 22-26 May 1981.

[15] G.Best, "Militarism and the Victorian Public School", in B.Simon and I.Bradley, eds., The Victorian Public School. Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution (Dublin : Gill & Macmillan, 1975), p.143.

> regiment".
> "He'll make a capital officer".
> "Ay, won't he", said Tom, brightening. "No fellow could handle boys better, and I suppose soldiers are very like boys".[16]

This image of the schoolboy-sportsman-soldier serving his nation overseas was to become a celebrated one in Victorian prose and fiction alike.[17] The realities of military life were brought home more practically. Military drill was advocated for use in the public schools by a group of prominent educationalists and politicians headed by Lord Elcho in 1860, and was actually adopted in many of the schools, both new and old.[18] However, it was the romantic and the adventurous image of warfare, and not the practical side which dominated. This was inextricably intertwined with the image of the officer class promoted and accepted by both the public schools and the army in mid-century.

Military historian Edward Spiers has summarised the quintessential nature of the Victorian military elite in terms of its perpetuation of the dominant officer gentleman tradition. Noting the exclusivity of the British officer class, he comments, "An officer had either to be born and bred and educated as a gentleman, or be prepared to act and behave like a 'natural' gentleman within the confines of regimental society". Embodied in these cultural and behavioural requirements were standards of dress and deportment, an unwritten code of honour and integrity and absolute conformation with the etiquette of polite society. These social attributes were deemed necessary for not only maintaining the harmony and concord of the officers' mess, but also for earning the respect and obedience of the rank and file.[19] The codified social values held in such esteem by the officer class described above were generated in no small part by the public school lifestyle. In both institutions, admission was not dependent on technical merit, but on one's ability to conform to the behavioural, social and financial expectations of those already holding power. Just as there were increasing efforts to maintain the class bias within the public school system during the latter half of the century,[20] so the military elite fought a rearguard action immediately after the Crimean War to protect their heritage of power by right of privilege. Reinforced until 1871 by the archaic purchase system, by which officers' commissions were bought and sold by the wealthy and titled, the social composition of the officer corps was resolutely defended and rationally promoted by its supporters in both politics and the armed forces. In 1836, for instance, the Duke of Wellington informed a Royal Commission that n.c.o.s promoted from the ranks "...do not make good officers; it does not answer. They are brought into a society to the manners of which they are not accustomed".[21] The Duke had been ably supported by the Adjutant-General's statement in 1840 to the effect that "It is the proud characteristic of the British Army that its officers are gentlemen by education, manners and habits".[22] Clearly, all three of these components were attainable at the British public school. The transfer of boys from these institutions into the army was thus a major source of officer material throughout the nineteenth century.[23]

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[16] Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857; rpt. Harmondsworth : Puffin Books, 1977), p.276.
[17] Reinforced in fiction, for instance, by William Johnston's One of Buller's Horse. A Tale of the Zulu Campaign, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1900). My thanks to P. and J.Beedie for making this material available to me.
[18] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.96 .
[19] Edward Spiers, The Army and Society 1815-1914 (London: Longman, 1980), p.1. This summary is quite in accord with other historical examinations of the British officer corps for this period.

Immediately following the Crimean War, however, there arose a popular challenge to the traditional passage of the privileged from boarding school to officers' mess. Entering the army direct from public school, potential officers were notoriously ignorant in matters of military education. Those who entered the forces via the Royal Military Academy, or Sandhurst, had their short-comings in science and mathematics equally exposed. They were the products of an education system whose curriculum revolved around the study of Latin and

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[20] B.Simon, The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780 - 1870 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), pp.318; 323-324.
[21] Spiers, p.5.
[22] Quoted in Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, The Army in Victorian Society (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p.16.
[23] As indicated in Harries-Jenkins, "Table 14 - Known Educational Institutions Attended by Successful Army Examination Candidates During the Period 1855-67", p.139, and similiar tables in T.W.Bamford, Rise of the Public Schools (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), pp.209-219.

Greek and, as the years passed, compulsory team games. These preparations were adequate so long as the army continued to select its officer recruits on the criterion of character development rather than intellectual accomplishments, for as Harries-Jenkins remarks: "The essential objectives of the public school and the University were...the transmission of a body of central cultural values, to the total exclusion of considerations about vocational or professional needs".[24] This situation was most apparent to those aspiring to break the upper class monopoly within the service, and considerable external force was brought to bear through published letters and pamphlets, and dialogue in the press. *The Times* did not even wait until the end of the war before informing its readers :

> The noblest army ever sent from these shores has been sacrificed to the grossest mismanagement. Incompetency, lethargy, aristocratic *hauteur*, official indifference, favour, routine perverseness and stupidity reign, revel and riot in the camp before Sebastopol.[25]

A few hurried organisational changes were quickly initiated. Of these, the most significant were the introduction of competitive entrance examinations for potential officer recruits at Sandhurst and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. This rocked the very foundations of the traditional officer recruitment pattern, for it opened up the prospect for young men trained in a utilitarian and meritocratic educational system to accede to the positions of officers in the British army; steps were taken to redress the balance immediately. One contempory officer wrote indignantly :

> An artilleryman should be able to understand the principles of gunnery...but will any examination discover whether he has activity of body, proficiency in field sports, and qualification for commanding men? - three other characteristics of almost equal importance to the artilleryman in the field, but which are unfortunately precisely those which the successful candidate of a

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[24] Harries-Jenkins, p.112.
[25] *The Times*, 3 February 1855, in Harries-Jenkins, p.130.

> public examination open to the whole world is least likely to possess.[26]

These sentiments were to some extent quashed by the cynical reminder that :

> The public cannot forget that the right to appoint incompetent boys on the staff has been hitherto claimed as almost essential to the very existence of the British Army.[27]

Nevertheless, the army 'rearguard' fought a gallant defence of their right to select the public schoolboy trained in games rather than scientific lore. Sir John Burgoyne in August of 1857 re-emphasised the vital place that sports and games held as a criterion for successful soldiering:

> At a public school will be found one set of boys, who apply to their studies, and make the greater progress in them, another set take to cricket, boating, fives, swimming &c. Now, of the two, I should decidedly prefer the latter, as much more likely to make good officers, but they are to be absolutely rejected, and for ever, unless they can come up to the mark in other matters which are of no absolute use to them in their profession.[28]

However, the campaign was far from lost. Reinforcements were about to bring relief fom a variety of sources. One Major-General Portlock, whilst sympathising with Sir John's theme, felt he had done the public schoolboys little credit by his division of them into two mutually exclusive categories of 'scholars' and 'athletes'. Portlock, basing his rationale on his own experiences behind the "venerable walls" of Tiverton, concluded that there were not two, but three classes of public schoolboy at large :

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[26] Anonymous contributor to a collection of papers and letters on military education at R.M.A. Woolwich, housed in the Royal Engineer Corps Library, Royal School of Military Engineering, Brompton Barracks, Chatham, England, p.9.
[27] *Daily News*, 23 April 1857.
[28] Sir John Burgoyne, Army Reform, n.p., 1857, p.10.

> 1. A very small one, of boys who attend only to their studies, and being of timid character, take no part in school games.
>
> 2. A much larger class, who trusting to considerable natural talents, are less industrious than the first class, but yet often rise to the highest distinction both in mental and physical accomplishments; boys, in fact, who possess sound and active bodies combined with sound and active minds: and
>
> 3. A class dull in mind, sometimes active in body, sometimes as slow in body as in mind, and very frequently the greatest bullies and the most discreditable members of the community.[29]

Portlock's secret weapon was, however, a letter from the Headmaster of Harrow, Dr. Charles Vaughan, which he gleefully reproduced in full to support his case for the public school officer being a young man possessed of envious qualities - *mens sana in corpore sano*.

> At Harrow it is thought almost *discreditable* not to play, and play well, at some game. And I am very happy to say that very many, if not almost all, of our most successful scholars have been great also in the school games...No-one need be afraid of an army of bookworms from *Harrow*. The few boys who could thus be described will never offer themselves as soldiers.[30]

Chameleon-like, the public schools would adapt to the challenges placed before them rather than yield their prestigious places in British society :

> The new regulations will only have the effect of giving you the same raw material a little better manufactured than heretofore. You will have bold brave boys offering themselves for the army as before, only they will be a little better equipped intellectually.[31]

One way in which the schools could prepare their pupils for entry into the officer corps was the formation of 'Army' or 'Modern' sides to the curriculum, which were particularly well defined at Eton and Harrow, and the crop of new public schools including Wellington, Clifton, Cheltenham and Marlborough.[32] In 1863, for instance, the modern side at Marlborough catered for 276 boys, nearly half of the school's total. Rossall adopted a similar curriculum. As the Headmaster of Marlborough stated, this system succeeded in being vocational and utilitarian, whilst retaining "all the advantages of public school life".[33] At the same time, the army establishment was not about to relinquish its traditional source of officer material merely to cater to public opinion. Harries-Jenkins illustrates how the regulations governing the marking of the entrance examinations sustained the public school bias. Candidates at Sandhurst sat several papers, needing to score 900 marks from the optional section, which included classics, modern languages, history and natural science. The classics paper carried a total of 3,600 marks. All the other papers carried only 1,200 each. A similar weighting was employed at Woolwich under the 1868 regulations, again allowing the classically-educated public schoolboy a distinct advantage over his vocationally-educated middle class competitor.[34]

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[29] Major-General Portlock, Reform or No Reform for the Army: That is the Question (London: Edward Stanford, 1858).
[30] Charles Vaughan to Major-General Portlock, 10 October 1857, in Portlock, npage.
[31] Portlock, npage.

The effect of all these machinations was to affect an image of change while largely retaining the *status quo*. Despite calls for increased professionalism within officer ranks, the ideals valued by the army were still those traits of character which were trained in the closed communities of the public schools, and which were seen to originate increasingly from the games field. An officer was still expected to be an amateur and a gentleman prior to becoming a soldier.[35] Though *Punch* could call sartorically for the development of "The Fine Young English Officer As He Is To Be", the criteria for his selection continued to be a combination of those physical qualities celebrated in stanzas three and four, together with the possession of a character moulded in one of the country's 'better' schools :

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[32] J.Gathorne-Hardy, The Old School Tie. The Phenomenon of the English Public School (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p.101.

[33] Quoted in Simon, p.303.

[34] Harries-Jenkins, p.141.

[35] Correlli Barnett notes, "Recruitment of officers from a homogenous social class gives a ready-made homogeneity to the officer corps. If that class also places high value on courage, hardihood, and leadership, a ready-made military quality is also imported to the officer corps", "The Education of Military Elites", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.2 (July 1967), p.19.

The Fine Young English Officer As He Is To Be

I sing of one whom now that we've begun to educate
The House of Commons lately made the subject of debate
Whose qualities each member vied with each to numerate
And what their fancy painted him I'll now proceed to state
'Tis the fine young English Officer as he is to be - in time.

His head so old on shoulders young with knowledge overflows
Acquaintance with all sciences and arts its stores disclose
All books and in all languages by heart almost he knows
And he's able to write legibly, and what is more, compose
Like a wise young English Officer, the reason of my rhyme.

Italian, French and Spanish, and Dutch, high or low, he'll speak
Count Troy-weight like a Trojan, tell the time of day in Greek
And if to serve in India he be a chosen man, he
Will astonish all the natives in the choicest Hindustanee
Like a polyglot young Officer, fit for the future time.

Nor are his powers of body less than are those of his mind
Quick eye, strong arm and foot so fleet as ne'er to lag behind
Good lungs and constitution such as no fatigue can feel
With iron nerves and sinews and a heart as true as steel
Has this brave young English Officer to serve us in his prime.

A Centaur in his horsemanship, an Angelo to fence.
In every manly pastime he makes way, nor makes pretence
From battle-fight to fisticuffs good generalship he proves
In glory's race a winner and a "wunner" with the gloves
Like the plucky British Officer of past and present time.

He can draw with equal credit an earthwork or a cheque
Keeps a spotless reputation and accounts without a speck
Knows staff-duties and horseflesh, can outbargain Greek or Jew
Has ready wit at his command, and ready money, too.
This accomplished English Officer, one of the coming time.

MORAL

Now all you fine young officers who'd mind your ps and qs
The more you're like this picture the more your *Punch* you'll please
Fight then your best with ignorance, count folly as your foe
And while not less ornamental, far more useful you'll grow

As befits the British Officer, pride of the coming time.[36]

The abolition of purchase was passed by Royal Warrant in 1871 after Cardwell's Bill had failed to pass through the House of Lords. Few of those who understood the system of officer recruitment and promotion, including Cardwell himself, actually believed that abolition of purchase would diversify the social composition of the officer corps.[37] For the most vocal and uninformed critics, however, this was something of a victory for meritocracy. As has been illustrated, in reality the ruling elite of the country had merely lost a battle that was to win them the war. Recruitment for officers continued to be aimed at the public, endowed, or proprietory schools - in 1891 the number of entrants to Sandhurst furnished by these schools was still as high as 255 out of a total of 339 available places[38] - and these young officers in turn continued to preach the military advantages that were to be reaped from the playing fields. Headmaster Haslam of Ripon School emphasised these values in his Speech Day sermon of 1884:

> ..Wellington said that the playfields of Eton won the battle of Waterloo, and there was no doubt that the training of the English boys in the cricket and football field enabled them to go to India, and find their way from island to island in the Pacific, or to undergo fatiguing marches in Egypt. Their football and cricket experiences taught them how to stand up and work, and how to take and give a blow.[39]

His sentiments were reiterated in what can be viewed as the ultimate poetic expression of the interrelationship of public school athleticism and warfare, Henry Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada*. The following stanzas emphasise the positive transfer of experience which supporters of athleticism believed served the British cause throughout the colonial battles and skirmishes which became known as 'Queen Victoria's Little Wars' :

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[36] *Punch*, July/August 1857, recorded in the Royal Engineer Corps Library, Royal School of Military Engineering, Brompton Barracks, Chatham, England.

[37] Robert Woodall, "The Abolition of Purchase in the British Army", *History Today*, vol.29 (1979), p.684.

[38] Barnett, p.27.

[39] Quoted in J.A.Mangan, "Class, Cultural Hegemony and the Institutionalisation of British Games", a seminar paper presented at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, March, 1983.

> There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight
> Ten to make and the match to win -
> A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
> An hour to play and the last man in.
> And its not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
> Or the selfish hope of a season's fame
> But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote -
> Play up! Play up! And play the game!
>
> The sand of the desert is sodden and red -
> Red with the wreck of the square that broke -
> The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
> And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
> The river of death has brimmed his banks
> And England's far and Honour a name,
> But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks;
> Play up! Play up! and play the game![40]

Newbolt's renowned poem was written in 1898, and should be seen as a representative rather than an atypical viewpoint. The schoolboy-sportsman-soldier, patriotic and manly in his game outlook upon adversity was by now a familiar image, and was destined to survive to at least the outbreak of the First World War. Its resilience was such that even after the humiliating reverses endured by the British forces in South Africa during 'Black Week'[41], and the bloody defeat at Spion Kop on 24 January 1900, one Captain Cairnes was still confidently advising the young military aspirant that "prominence in athletic exercises is the surest way to success".[42] Cairnes was far from alone in proferring such advice, and as Britain entered into the Edwardian age it was clear that Tom Brown and friend East incarnate were both flourishing and well, and merely awaiting the greater call from country and from King.

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[40] H.Newbolt, Poems Old and New, 1912.
[41] 10-15 December, 1899.
[42] W.E.Cairnes, Social Life in the British Army, 1900, in Harries-Jenkins, p.96.

The overview of the military elite's dependence upon the public schools for the provision of the 'correct' type of young officer indicated clearly that as athleticism grew in strength and popularity, desirable military character traits were held more and more to be inculcated on the games field. Sports thus were accorded an essential part in the cloning and grooming of young 'Tom Browns' for the army establishment, and more than 6,000 ex-public schoolboy officers saw service in the second South African (Boer) War.[43] In order to present a balanced national picture, however, it will be necessary to examine what role sport played in the education and military experience of that other mainstay of the British Army, 'Tommy Atkins'.

Just as the post-Crimean era was one of change for the public schools, so it was for the education and military life of the poorer classes. With reference to the latter, one observant clergyman, the Reverend Henry P.Wright, commented:

> ...hitherto, the upper classes had merely regarded soldiers as instruments 'for keeping down riots' and 'for figuring at reviews'; 'the public' he claimed, had looked upon soldiers as fitted only for 'swearing, drinking, and fighting'. The war had altered these impressions. From the wartime correspondence published in the press, it was apparent that these 'gallant soldiers' had 'souls to be saved'.[44]

Of particular interest to this study was the additional recognition that soldiers had not only souls to be saved, but physiques to be strengthened. As will be seen, though, the development of character was not held to be a major part of training the troops.

Despite the Rev. Wright's enthusiasms, the nation and the army continued to co-exist in an uneasy atmosphere of mutual misunderstanding and distrust, fostered in no small part by the earlier practice of billeting the troops on an unwilling population. However, the Victorian public demonstrated a remarkable propensity for heaping admiration and adulation upon the victorious army whilst, at the same, time remaining ignorant of and hostile to it as an institution. One foreign observer wrote of this strange paradox as late as 1901: "How this blind glorification and worship of the Army continues to co-exist with the contemptuous dislike felt towards the numbers of it must remain a problem in the national psychology".[45] As an institution, its stigmatism derived from two major sources. Firstly, as has been shown, the officer class was almost exclusively recruited from the monied, landed and/or aristocratic classes, and were thus depicted by those critics jealous of their privileged ascendancy as amateurs, quite militarily incompetent. Secondly, the neglect and maltreatment of the army by successive British governments meant that it was not a bright career prospect for the recruit to the ranks. In 1898, the same year that brought forth Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* with its glorification of army *panache*, it was still being written that :

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[43] A.H.H.Maclean, The Public Schools and the War in South Africa, in Brian Gardner The Public Schools. An Historical Survey (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973), p.207-8.
[44] Spiers, pp.116-117.

> No tradition is more deeply rooted in the minds of the poorer classes in all parts of the United Kingdom, than that which represents enlistment as the last step on the downward career of a young man.[46]

Until 1847, signing up had been for life, or until release by a medical discharge. Legislation in this year reduced the commitment only to 21 years in the infantry and 24 in other corps, but did nothing to increase the flow of men into the services. In 1859 the Royal Commission on recruiting was told "there are very few men who enlist for the love of being a soldier; it is a very rare exception". More common were less honourable motives - "they are starving, or they have quarrelled with their friends, or their masters, or there are cases of bastardy and all sorts of things".[47] For the next forty years repeated official enquiries reported that almost without exception, it was necessity which drove men into the army.[48]

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[45] Theodore von Sosnosky, "England's Danger: the Future of British Army Reform", London, 1901, in Harries-Jenkins, p.6.

[46] H.O.Arnold-Foster, "The Army and the Government's Opportunity", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol.42, 1898, pp.345-6 in Alan Ramsay Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), p.244.

[47] Report of the Commission on Recruiting, 1861, p.2, in Skelley, p.248.

[48] Skelley, p.248.

One way in which the army could attempt to circumvent its manpower shortages was to lower the physical standards required for entry. In 1861 a minimum height of 5'8" was demanded. By 1870, this had fallen to 5'4.5", and in 1883 dropped to its all time low of 5'3". A minimum weight of 115 lbs. was also stipulated in 1884. The implications of these alterations are summarised by Skelley :

> It is clear, therefore, that while the health and almost certainly the physical stature of the British people improved markedly between 1856 and 1899, the army was forced to lower physical standards in order to attract to the colours a slightly smaller proportion of the nation's youth.[49]

The author goes on to reveal that in the period between 1890 and 1898, 26 - 30% of those enlisted failed to meet minimum health requirements at a time when the physical standards were at their lowest ever.

The deterioration in the physical quality of the recruits necessitated prompt action, and in 1858 the Army Sanitary Commission strongly recommended that some form of physical training be given to the ranks. The decision was taken to incorporate a programme of gymnastics into the training of each recruit, and an officer and twelve n.c.o.s were sent to Archibald MacLaren's recently opened gymnasium on the corner of Alfred Street and Bear Lane in Oxford.[50] MacLaren is a most influential figure in this era, and his views on physical education and training were widely admired.[51] Born in Alloa in 1819 or 1820, he had studied fencing, gymnastics and some medicine in Paris, and put the knowledge he had derived into practice in Oxford upon his return, where he opened a fencing school and gymnasium. It was his scientific approach to bodily training and exercise which attracted the military, and their contingent spent six months with MacLaren before returning to the new army school of gymnastics at Aldershot. Together with them went MacLaren's first publication, A Military

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[49] Skelley, p.238.

[50] Skelley, p.58 ; McIntosh, P.E. In England, p.92.

[51] Mangan, for instance, reveals Almond's tribute to MacLaren's influence at Loretto in Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, p.54.

System of Gymnastic Exercises for the Use of Instructors, and under the encouragement of Major F.Hammersley, this became the army's training manual for the physical training of recruits. MacLaren continued to support and promote the army's physical training campaign with a series of books and articles published throughout the 1860s.[52] A System of Fencing for the Use of Instructors in the Army (1864), and A Series of Exercises for the Regulation Clubs (1863) were combined with his first book in 1868, and published as the definitive textbook for the training of English soldiers.[53] The exercises were almost entirely performed in conjunction with equipment - horizontal bars, ropes, weights and barbells and the vaulting horse-amongst others - and were placed very firmly in the regimented, educational half of MacLaren's division of exercise. The recreative side, which included school sports and team games, was not considered of immediate necessity to the ranks. This division of sports by social class can be seen as one means by which social inequality was fostered for militaristic purposes, and is a component of the argument advanced here: "...military obedience would be impossible were it not that the soldier comes from the class that is accustomed to respect and obey the class from which the officer comes".[54] Though MacLaren admitted that the ability to foster national character was "valuable beyond computation",[55] their applicability to the armed forces he felt to be limited, for "...not one of them has for *object* the development of the body, or even the giving of it, or to any part of it, health or strength...And in this, as purely recreative exercise, lies their chief value, the forgetfulness of self, the game being all-in-all".[56] These sentiments were evidently endorsed quite happily by the officer class, who continued to send their sons to the games-playing public schools where the gymnasiums, if they existed at all, took a sorry second place to the cricket pitch and the football field.

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[52] Mangan notes that he published six articles in *Macmillan's Magazine* between 1860 and 1864, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, p.54.

[53] Ellen Gerber, Innovators and Institutions in Physical Education (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1971), p.217.

[54] Sidney Herbert to Mr.Raikes Currie, 25 September 1857, in Harries-Jenkins, p.16.

[55] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.95.

[56] MacLaren, A System of Physical Education (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1869), in Gerber, p.218.

MacLaren's influence waned in the 1880s, and following his death in 1884 there were some experiments with a system of drill to music drawn from the Danish techniques of Niels Bukh. It was the Swedish system of gymnastics and calisthenics, however, that gained most approval, and would be officially incorporated into the forces in 1906. The adoption of the new approach to recruit training was accompanied by the provision of more than eighty new gymnasia, and the army's first swimming pool, opened at Aldershot in 1900.[57] The Swedish system instilled not only fitness and vitality into soldiers, but certain moral developments, too. Discipline and obedience were the factors emphasised by the regimented Swedish format, and were welcomed by the English military instructors. However, from a comment by Surgeon-Captain J.R.Forrest in 1896, it would appear that the more traditional soldier weaknesses for alcohol, fighting and women were not easily relinquished for the benefits of exercise :

> The whole system of physical training in the Army is most carefully calculated to produce, and does produce, men of the greatest physical vigour, and it is not the fault of the system that the Army hospitals are so full as they are. Fifty per cent of all the cases would not be there if soldiers would manfully determine not to allow themselves to be led into any excesses of ANY KIND. They would be better men physically and morally. The vicious man is never an athlete, and conversely the athlete is always a well educated man.[58]

Towards the end of the century, a variety of regimental sports and competitions began to gain popularity amongst the troops. Such recreation for the ranks had been recommended as early as 1836 by the Royal Commission on Military Punishments, who encouraged officers to support their men in the playing of 'manly games', mentioning in particular fives, rackets, cricket and football.[59] It would appear that this advice was ignored until the time that such pursuits had become organised, institutionalised and imbued with the ability to train character.

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[57] Skelley, p.59.

[58] Surgeon-Captain J.R.Forrest, "The Soldier's Health and How to Preserve it", Aldershot, 1896, pp.19-20 in Skelley, p.60 .

[59] E.S.Turner, Gallant Gentlemen. A Portrait of the British Officer, 1600-1956 (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), p.195.

Certainly, it was not likely that officers would partake in sport with their social inferiors in the army before such time that they were playing these same games with their peers, and Hearl has shown that this situation did not occur in the military training establishments until the 1860s.[60] Nevertheless, such innovation did appear in the army both at home and on service overseas. The first army boxing championships were held in 1893, whilst soccer matches between troops were quite common, and army teams were playing in the Football Association competitions.[61] Nevertheless, gymnastics remained the official army practice and continued to be promoted for reasons of health, correction and the inculcation of discipline. During the vital years before the First World War, then, sport as such was still largely the preserve of the officers, and not the ranks. This division of recreation according to social class was mirrored in the formal education afforded to the poorer classes in Britain.

In the same year that the Clarendon Commission was appointed, the assistant commissioners' inquiry into the "State of Popular Education in England" published its Report. At this time in 1861 there existed no form of state-directed elementary education for the populace, nor would there be until after the passing of the Forster Education Act in 1870. Two major independent bodies attempted to alleviate the educational plight of the poor - the British and Foreign School Society, and the National Society for the Education of the Poor according to the Principles of the Church of England. In 1833, Parliament had supplemented their meagre budgets with a grant of 20,000 pounds, and by 1839 had provided the administrative machinery to supervise the dispensing of these, and other, monies.[62] Though a number of individuals recognised the desirability of the children within these schools receiving some physical exercise, little actual progress in this area was made. McIntosh suggests two reasons for this. Firstly, he comments that the atrocious condition of the schools, and the abject ignorance of the pupils, many of whom were in a state of gross under-nourishment due to their poverty-stricken backgrounds, provided the would-be educators with many problems more immediate than a lack of physical training. Secondly, despite a recommendation from the Education Department advocating the provision of playgrounds for these schools, very few had any form of exercise area. In this situation, though the Department in 1839 was able to emphasise that moral benefit and character development were believed to be facilitated by instruction in physical exercise, the realities of the situation outweighed their enthusiasms.[63] By 1861, it was clear that there had been no dramatic alterations. One commissioner recorded his observations on the schools of south west England which he had visited during his investigation:

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[60] Trevor Hearl, "Fighting Fit: Some Military Initiatives in Physical Education in Britain, 1800 - 1860", Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain, Loughborough University, 17-19 December 1982, pp.59-62.

[61] Skelley, p.163.

[62] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.84.

> The playgrounds attached to the schools are of very slight utility for any purpose of recreation beyond affording a place where the children can be turned out between lessons to get a mouthful of fresh air...In one or two places there is a covered shed, nominally for use in wet weather. The games played seemed generally aimless, as though there were no-one taking any interest in them or directing them - for good games need to be taught as well as good lessons - and I do not think that the encouragement of healthy athletic sports such as cricket, football, etc., has yet found the legitimate place in the education of boys of this class which public school men would desire, who vividly remember how much it contributed to their own.[64]

Frazer is one of few who can be found calling for *games* for the poorer classes. For the most part, concerns for their lack of exercise were couched in the utilitarian terminology of those who feared they would be unable to fulfill their roles in an increasingly demanding British society :

> ...it is expedient for the increase of bodily as well as mental aptitudes of

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[63] J.G.Dixon et al, Landmarks, p.192; McIntosh, P.E. in England, pp.85-88.

[64] Rev. James Frazer, Reports of the Assistant Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State of Popular Education in England, London: Education Department, 1861, vol.2, p.98, in McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.89.

> children for civil, industrial as well as for possible military service that encouragement and aid should be given for the extension of the practice of systematized gymnastic training, and for the teaching of military and naval drill.[65]

Thus while the middle and upper class boys were having their characters and physiques honed on the games field, the poorer classes were unlikely to receive anything more than marching exercises or regimented gymnastics from their own paltry educational establishments. The military implications of sport in British education here are very significant, and mimic those already identified in the army itself. From the time that games began their upsurge in the public schools of the middle century, one section of the population incorporated them as part of their training for leadership, whilst simultaneously withholding them from that section of the population who were being trained to obey.

The Forster Education Act of 1870 did little to change the meagre fare of physical education for the poor, despite the pleas of Mathias Roth who pointed to the fact that the army's rejection of recruits between 1864-67 was in excess of 40%.[66] The only concession made by the Education Department was to allow schools to file for a financial grant from the government if they employed an army drill sergeant to march their pupils for two hours a week. This, the Department felt, "would be sufficient to teach the boys habits of sharp obedience, smartness, order, and cleanliness".[67] By 1880, 1,277 schools were utilising such military drill as part of their school curriculum, despite a clamour for the introduction of gymnastic systems from both Parliament and several increasingly vocal school boards. It was from the latter institutions rather than the former that the impulse for change came, and during the 1880s school boards in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Leeds and Liverpool all instituted some form of gymnastics for their charges. Official recognition of their programmes was not obtained from the Education Department until 1890, and they did not qualify for any financial renumeration from the government until 1895. Sports and games were not to be acknowledged until 1900, after the efforts of some participating teachers had been instrumental in popularising football and cricket in what were often limited and restricting playing areas in the major cities of the nation. Even this move was tempered by the revelation of the recruiting figures for the onset of the Boer War, which showed in one instance in Manchester the rejection of 8,000 men out of a total of 11,000 who had volunteered for service.

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[65] Lord Elcho, 1862, in J.G.Dixon et al, Landmarks, p.192.
[66] J.G.Dixon et al, Landmarks, p.107-8.
[67] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.109.

Discipline had dominated as the underlying impulse behind physical education for the poor. Even as the twentieth century opened, it was clear that the nation's health had not been measurably improved by the half-hearted measures of physical training that had been endorsed by the government. Changes were demanded, and in the months following the disasters of 'Black Week' and the defeat at Spion Kop, some changes were indeed to be forthcoming. The military legacy, however, was to remain unaltered. Officers needed to be fit to command, and were thought to be best trained on the games fields of the public schools. The ranks needed to be fit to fight, and their obedience, discipline and health were to be improved by gymnastics and drill. In sporting terms, the stereotypical images of both Tommy Atkins and his officer, Tom Brown, had been established. These images were not to be easily disinherited, even though the Edwardian era was to highlight their shortcomings in several instances. Nevertheless, sport and war were inextricably linked, both practically and ideologically, throughout the social strata of the nation by the opening of the twentieth century, and were destined to walk boldly hand-in-hand into the conflagration of World War One.

Chapter IV

STAGNATION AND CHANGE :
SPORT, GAMES AND PHYSICAL TRAINING IN EDWARDIAN BRITAIN, 1902 - 1914

The previous chapter revealed the origins of the social interaction between sport, education and military thought and practice in Victorian Britain. It illustrated that by the outbreak of the war in South Africa in 1899, sport and physical training were serving two distinctly separate utilitarian purposes in the eyes of the military establishment. Firstly, team games had been identified and accepted as a crucial instrument for the moulding of the young officer's character, and this served to reinforce the strong links between the public schools and the army. Secondly, physical activity and a limited amount of team games had been fully sanctioned for the troops as an effective and desirable means of simultaneously inculcating health and military discipline into the soldier in the ranks. This fortuitous blend of the ideological with the practical had contributed to the creation of an increasingly popular image of the physically superior British soldier, equally at home on either the sports field or the battlefield. As has been seen above, this image often bore little relation to the real world, where recruiting figures for the army continued to show a high rejection rate for recruits on grounds of physical incapacity.

The progress and eventual outcome of the war in South Africa was to prove influential in many areas of sport and education identified in the previous chapter. The outbreak of the conflict was greeted with initial enthusiasm by a British public grown accustomed to reports of successful and heroic encounters with hostile forces around the Empire. An equally vocal cry of indignation was raised in the nation's press as the beleagured British forces struggled vainly against a numerically inferior foe who steadfastly refused to fight according to the traditional British conventions of warfare. By the end of the war in 1902, outrage had been tempered with concern, and the years following the war saw suggestions being voiced from every quarter on how best the nation and the Empire could learn from the lessons handed out on the dusty and unforgiving South African veldt. In the changes, revisions and improvements that occurred, sport and physical education were once again to receive prominent consideration. This chapter, therefore, will review the twelve year period from the end of the Boer War in 1902 to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1914, making particular reference to the role of sport and the contributions of the military to physical training in Edwardian society. It will reveal the period to be characterised by both change and stagnation in these two areas and will show how the adoption of new methods and ideas, together with the retention of traditional means, both had crucial parts to play in the shaping of British responses to the ensuing Great War.

The cessation of hostilities in South Africa in March 1902 gave little cause for celebration in England. Less than 60,000 Boer farmers had succeeded in confounding the efforts of almost half a million British troops at the high point of the campaign and Kitchener's 'burnt earth' policy of total warfare, designed to bring the nation to its knees, had aroused outrage and hostility from all over the globe. The army, and in particular its officers, became the designated scapegoats for the nation's importunities, and considerable criticism, some of it constructive and outspoken, was levelled at the elite of the officer corps.[1] In an attempt to reverse the early setbacks of the war and to appease the army's critics, Lord Roberts had executed a major purge of his subordinate commanders before returning to England in November 1900, confident of an imminent military triumph.[2] This had failed to quieten the critics and had certainly not ended the war. Lord Kitchener, Robert's Chief of Staff, commented upon his arrival in South Africa: "People here do not seem to look upon the war sufficiently seriously; they consider it too much like a game of polo with intervals for afternoon tea".[3] At home in England, the worst was feared. Viscount Curzon wrote to a former junior minister at the War Office that "disasters are so unbroken, our generals so uniformly incompetent, our inability to make headway so consistent as to engender suspicions that our system must be rotten to the very core".[4] These concerned sentiments were reiterated by Captain W.E.Cairnes, an army man who joined the staff of the *Westminster Gazette* in November 1899, and thereafter wrote a daily column on the war until April 1901. These articles, together with several books on the army's performance in South Africa, shot him to prominence and were widely acclaimed for their blend of thoughtful insight and unremitting sarcasm. Whilst at all times extolling the bravery and fortitude of the individual soldier, Cairnes pointed out that dauntless courage alone was no longer sufficient to win wars in the twentieth century; courage unscientifically directed was an invitation to disaster, and greater attention must be paid to military and physical preparation of the officers and men prior to conflict.[5] Far more outspoken in his attack upon the deficiences of English officer material was A.H.H.Maclean, who based his rationale around the revelation that 90% of the officers who had served in the Boer War had been educated at public schools, citing the schools who were the leading contributors to the army for the campaign:

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[1] W.S.Hamer provides a thorough account of the progress and setbacks of the war, together with a review of the reception it was accorded in Britain in The British Army. Civil-Military Relations, 1885 - 1905 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), pp.176-222.

[2] Turner, p.265.

[3] Turner, p.265.

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[4] Viscount Curzon to St.John Broderick, 9 February 1900, in Spiers, p.240.

[5] W.E.Cairnes, An Absent-Minded War. Being Some Reflections on our Reverses and the Causes which have led to them. By a British Staff Officer (London: John Milne, 1900).

Table I

PUBLIC SCHOOL EX-PUPILS SERVING AS OFFICERS IN THE BRITISH ARMY DURING THE BOER WAR

Eton	1,326	Uppingham	178
Harrow	592	Bedford	144
Wellington	521	Malvern	132
Cheltenham	438	St.Paul's	132
Marlborough	379	U.S.C.	116
Charterhouse	367	Radley	108
Clifton	313	Dover	103
Haileybury	281	Bradfield	93
Winchester	274	Shrewsbury	91
Rugby	236	Repton	90

Source: A.H.H.Maclean, The Public Schools and the War in South Africa, in Gardner, pp.207-208.

Maclean's conclusions to his study did not spare the rod:

> The English officer is uneducated, he is 'stupid'. Hence our many 'mishaps'. He was brought up on games. He is over-addicted to polo. He does not read military history. He drags mahogany mess tables, pianos and other luxuries after him on his campaigns. He does very well against savage or coloured races, but pitted against white men, he breaks down. More officers of the studious type are needed. The right sort cannot be got from the public schools.[6]

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[6] Maclean, quoted in M.van Wyk Smith, Drummer Hodge. The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War

These literary assaults upon the public school officer did not pass without comment from their supporters and admirers. One such staunch ally, H.C.Macdowall, penned the following lines as a *riposte* to the critics, calling attention to the loyalty and capacity for self-sacrifice possessed by such young men:

Through bitter nights and burning days
He watched the veld stretch bare and grim;
At home beside the cheerful blaze
We wrote our views of him.

We mourned his curious lack of brain;
We judged him stupid, judged him slow;
How much of what he knew was vain -
How much he did not know!

Where Duty called, he pressed in haste;
That, too, was wrong, that haste undue;
Why practise with such wanton waste
The only art he knew?

Too well he loved each foolish game;
'Is War a game?' we sternly cried.
And while we talked of England's name
For England's sake he died.[7]

Appealing to the consciences of the critics, however, was not a productive tactic, and Macdowall's comment was subsumed under a tirade levelled against the lack of professional competence amongst the members of the British officer corps.[8] Cairnes voiced the thoughts of many when he wrote: "We need an army which is an up to date fighting machine not a mere organization for the purpose of providing an elegant employment for the leisure hours of the wealthy classes".[9] These tones bring immediately to mind the identical calls for a meritocratic

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[6] (cont'd)(1899-1902) (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1978), p.59.
[7] Published in the *Spectator*, 15 December, 1900. Quoted in van Wyk Smith, p.16.
[8] Spiers, pp.241-2.
[9] Cairnes, p.146.

selection procedure for officers following the Crimean War. As Maclean's figures show, however, the public schools' domination of the higher echelons of the army had been somehow maintained for almost fifty years, despite the nineteenth century demands for change that were reviewed in the previous chapter.[10] Several factors had aided and abetted their retention of this stronghold, not the least of which was the continued reluctance of those in power to promote men from the ranks to a commission; during the Boer War period only 136 such promotions were made - an average of only 27 per year.[11] Another means of maintaining the domination of the officer corps by the wealthy classes was revealed by two Select Committees appointed to inquire into the education and training of army officers after the war. Lord Stanley's report confirmed that junior officers were unable to live on their army pay alone, and were therefore still greatly reliant on personal funding.[12] Both his committee and that of Akers-Douglas, which reported in 1902, recommended banning polo and reducing uniform and mess expenditure in an attempt to alleviate the problem. As the army would not accept these proposals, and the government would not sanction a pay increase for the corps, the situation remained unaltered.[13] The Akers-Douglas Report also re-affirmed the government's commitment to the concept of promotion by merit. This was summarily dismissed by army supporters as being too open to favouritism, and so the *status quo* was once again maintained. As promotion was no longer available for purchase and seniority alone did not guarantee a rise in rank, the army Selection Boards made recourse to confidential letters of reference prepared by the applicant's commanding officer. These reports were shown to be often biased, or totally vague on professional military matters. In some cases, an officer's promotion was assessed on the strength of his polo game, his skills in field sports, or his "success in society".[14] The implications of all this evidence and accumulated criticism are clear. While the quality and aptitude of the young public school officer cannot be accurately measured, it is apparent that he and his fellows continued to dominate the British army through a system which employed social, educational and financial bias to preserve its exclusivity.

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[10] Although it should be pointed out that many of the 'new' public schools were now providing officer recruits to the army at the expense of both the nine 'great' public schools, and the specialised 'crammers'; Gardner, p.207.

[11] Turner, p.265. These figures are taken from 1 January 1898 to 31 December 1902.

[12] Spiers, p.248; confirmed in Cairnes, pp.23-4.

[13] Spiers, p.248-9.

[14] Spiers, p.249.

The army's attraction to public school games-playing gentlemen as officer material has been examined earlier in this study. It was observed that several schools, notably Eton, Wellington, Marlborough and Glenalmond developed 'army' or 'modern' sides to prepare their pupils for the officer school examinations, just as the more traditional classics-based curriculum aided student entry into the universities. Following the French invasion scare in 1859, several schools took advantage of the War Office circular of 12 May, and responded to the call to form small units which would be trained for proficiency in rifle shooting and drill on a part-time and strictly volunteer basis. Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Rossall, Felsted and Hurstpierpont schools all formed such cadet corps, or rifle corps, in 1860, and were followed by Marlborough in 1861 and Cheltenham in 1862. Within the next three decades, Winchester (1870), Charterhouse (1873), Glenalmond and Clifton College (1875), Wellington (1882), Malvern (1883), Haileybury (1887), Sherbourne (1888) and St.Paul's (1890) had all followed suit.[15] In these formative years, the school corps often had little in common. Eton and Wellington, for example, were two of only a very few schools whose units were officially recognized by the War Office. The other school corps variously attended summer camps, marched and drilled at field days, or shot in competitions against other schools and at the annual Bisley tournament.[16] The corps did not really gain in popularity amongst both boys and masters until after the Boer War, when an upsurge in both formation and enrollment occured.[17] The calls for greater military preparedness and efficiency following the South African conflict were to stimulate Haldane's army reforms, one component of which was the official formation and recognition of the various corps into the 'Officer Training Corps'. This move harnessed all of the military energies of the public school corps, and directed this force towards one critical goal - to speed the passage of young public school and university men into the officer ranks of the Special Reserve, or new 'territorial' army auxilary.[18] Haldane vigorously supported the scheme, claiming that the nation and the armed forces would benefit from "the spirit of militarism" which was to be found within the schools and universities.[19]

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[15] Alan R. Haig-Brown, The O.T.C.and the Great War (London: George Newnes Ltd., 1915), p.5.
[16] Best, pp.134-6.
[17] Best, p.136.

Throughout the early years of the new century, then, there was an increasing identification between the public schools and the nation's military preparations in an undeniably direct fashion. These martial associations were once again related in part to sport and the character development afforded by team games. Even as the games-playing officer was receiving the critical attentions of the British press, an army chaplain wrote to the *Spectator*, drawing attention to the rejuvenative effects of reading Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* to the soldiers in South Africa:

> Over and over again, the sick man wasted by wounds and disease; the strong man, doomed to inaction on the lines of communication; the man at the very front, almost within the range of the enemy's fire - has been nerved and cheered "to play the game" against all odds.[20]

Following the war, former Commander-in-Chief of the campaign Lord Roberts made frequent visits to Speech Days and Prize-givings at public schools around the country. In a speech to the boys of Glenalmond school in 1906, he reiterated the military values that could be derived from a public school training:

> I look to you public schoolboys to set an example. Let it be your ambition to render yourself capable of becoming leaders of those others who have not your

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[18] Best, p.137; Spiers, p.279. Haldane anticipated that a flow of some 800 officers per year would enter the ranks of the Special Reserve from the educated ranks of the O.T.C. He was to be greatly disappointed - by May 1912 he conceded that of the 18,000 cadets who had completed some form of military training, only 283 had entered the Special Reserve.

[19] Spiers, p.279.

[20] Revd.H.J.Rose, *Spectator,* no.89 (1902), p.566, in van Wyk Smith, p.1.

> advantages, should you ever be called upon to fight for your country...Public school training inculcates just those qualities which are required in leaders of men: self-reliance, determination, and a certain amount of give and take, exacting obedience to authority more by an appeal to honour and sound common sense than by severity, and by a happy mixture of prudence and audacity.[21]

A Lancing schoolmaster placed the transfer of these qualities from sports field to battlefield firmly in context, writing in 1902 of the football player, whose

> ...use on peaceful playing fields
> Of supple limbs and ever-quickening eye
> Win for him laurels in a sterner game
> Giving resource and strength that never yields,
> Making him such that he would rather die
> Than soil the honour of his country's name.[22]

Though these notions continued to be popularised, it must be noted that the public school O.T.C.s were not all necessarily the hive of patriotic athletes being moulded into soldiers. The Headmaster of Westminster reported in 1907 that the school did indeed have a fledgling cadet corps, but that some boys were not keen to join it because it was "...necessarily officered in the main by boys who are not very good at games, and consequently they are not quite so much respected".[23] Nevertheless, whether or not the public school athlete entered the army via the O.T.C., his potential value to the nation as a soldier was undeniably widely broadcast and recognized. The *Standard* reminded its readers in 1911 that "...in some lonely sentry box on the Empire's frontier, up there on the Khaiber or the Bolan, there a clean cheeked, smooth-haired boy will handle his half hundred wind-baked ruffians as if they were the Second Eleven and he their Captain".[24]

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[21] Quoted in Best, p.137.

[22] Alan R.Haig-Brown, Sporting Sonnets (London: n.p., 1902), p.16, in Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, p.192.

[23] Best, p.134.

[24] J.A. Mangan, "Images of Empire in the Late Victorian Public School", *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, vol.12, no.1 (January 1980), p.34.

The image of the schoolboy-soldier-sportsman had thus survived intact, despite almost 55 years of periodic bouts of vociferous criticism. The public schools continued to accept that games were a beneficial means of training character, and proponents of athleticism maintained their belief that team games bred good leaders of men. On the very eve of war, the Conference on Military Education held at the University of London concluded "The Public Schools and Universities have become, more than ever, an important source for the supply of commissioned ranks of the Army, and of every part of it".[25] This trend would reach its zenith in the opening months of the forthcoming conflict.

The elite circles of educational and military life had thus exhibited their abilities to sway with criticism, yet recover and retain their dominance. The watchword for the less-privileged classes during the same era was not retrenchment, but change. In sport, in education and in the army, the twelve year period overseen by this chapter marked several notable developments which were to both alter and reinforce the relationship between sport, physical training and warfare for the ordinary citizen prior to the outbreak of the war in 1914.

The sphere of education in particular had undergone major changes in the latter years of the nineteenth century which had implications for the role of sport and physical training in the lives of the mass of the population. In the first place, the Endowed Schools Act of 1869 had allowed small grammar and proprietary schools to shake off their traditional obligations to educate the poor children from their surrounding communities and expand to cater to the aspirations of lower and middle class parents who desired to educate their children in the public school tradition. These image-conscious and ambitious institutions adopted the visible trappings of the great public schools - pupil boarders, organised games, prefect systems, and, gradually, an officer training corps - and by this ostentatious mimicry ushered themselves into a new era of financial security and respectability.[26] The effect of this transformation was quite remarkable. By 1903, less than forty years from the time that the Clarendon Commission had found only nine institutions worthy of the title 'public school', there were 102 affiliated member schools of the Headmasters' Conference, catering to 30,000 pupils, who had achieved public school status.[27] The public school ethos, particularly its games playing element, was thereby directly reaching a far greater number of young men than ever before. The dissemination of the ethics and values of athleticism was destined to be increased accordingly.[28] These developments obviously had their greatest effect on those upwardly-mobile members of the middle class who could afford to pay for their children to be educated. Nevertheless, educational legislation was to foster the provision of physical training and games for the working classes, too, in this period. Most noteworthy was the gradual move away from the rigid imposition of military drill towards a recognition that character training through games could be beneficially utilised with the poor.

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[25] *Times Educational Supplement*, 3 February 1914, p.29.

[26] Mangan has researched this phenomenon at length, paying particular attention to the role of games in the transformation process in "Imitating Their Betters and Disassociating From Their Inferiors", Proceedings of the 1982 Annual Conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain, Loughborough University, 17-19 December 1982, 1-43.

The impetus for change in the schooling of the working classes came about slowly, but can be seen to be making headway in the 1890s, just prior to the formation of the Board of Education in 1899. By the time of its inception, this body was ultimately responsible for the schooling of more than two million pupils throughout the country. Though no direct legislation was to be passed until the first decade of the twentieth century, evidence of a growing concern with the physical education of the children is apparent in an example drawn from the advertisement of one Henry Payne, who stood for election to the Leicester School Board in 1897. Listed prominently in his manifesto is the following policy statement, "I think that facilities should be given for lessons in swimming for both sexes, and that the physical development of the children should receive attention as well as the intellectual".[29] Such comments found considerable favour with the influential Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, Robert Morant. An ex-public schoolboy, educated at Winchester, Morant wrote in his official capacity in 1904 :

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[27] Simon, pp.97-98.

[28] This process of vertical diffusion of the 'public school spirit' is given attention in chapter four of J.R. de S.Honey's Tom Brown's Universe. Patrick Dunae's Gentlemen Emigrants From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), illustrates in chapter three how the number of scholars receiving a public school education trebled between 1840 and 1870, and this was a factor in prompting many of these 'supernumary gentlemen' to emigrate, bringing with them their inculcated valuation of games and sportsmanship.

[29] Simon, p.153.

> The purpose of the Public Elementary school is to form and strengthen the character and to develop the intelligence of the children entrusted to it...The school must afford them every opportunity for the development of their bodies...The corporate life of the school, especially in the playground, should develop that instinct for fair play and for loyalty to one another which is the germ of a wider sense of honour in later life.[30]

Morant continued by stating that the elementary schools should afford their pupils "every opportunity for the healthy development of their bodies...by training them in appropriate physical exercises and encouraging them in organised games". If this sounds in any way reminiscent of the familiar public school ethos, the observation is not unfounded. Dr. Young, in his historical sketch of Morant written for the Spens Report in 1938 wrote that Morant's policies were "based entirely on the tradition of the grammar schools and public schools".[31] The move to introduce more games into the school curriculum came to fruition in 1906, when cricket, hockey, football and other organised games for both boys and girls were officially sanctioned for use in state schools in Morant's amended Code. Arguments in favour of this major policy change were put forward by the Board of Education, which pointed to the success of character training through games in the nation's great public schools and those grammar schools modelled on the public school system.[32] These endorsements were extended to the wider sphere of outdoor recreation in city parks for young children and adolescents during the long summer break from schooling over the next decade. The *Times Educational Supplement* reported:

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[30] *Code of Regulations for Elementary Schools*, H.M.S.O., 1904, in McIntosh, P.E. in England, pp.145-6. The role of Morant and other public school members of the Board of Education Inspectorate as agents in the transmission of the public school ethos, particularly with respect to games, is highlighted in J.A.Mangan, "Imitating Their Betters and Disassociating From Their Inferiors : Grammar Schools and the Games Ethic in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", p.24.

[31] Quoted in S.J.Curtis, Education in England Since 1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), chapter three, "The Reign of Sir Robert Morant", p.51.

[32] McIntosh, P.E. in England, pp.147-8.

> It has been the experience in London that organised games encourage corporate spirit and increase the physical and mental alertness of the children, and at the same time teach self-reliance and the need for discipline.[33]

The same column noted that some 97,000 student visits had been recorded to the parks and playing fields of the city of Manchester in a four month period, and made particular reference to the physical and moral benefits which were being derived by these working class children:

> The games supervisor reported that there was in nearly every case an all-round advance in the zest and playing capacity as compared with the preceeding summer; especially was improvement shown in the way the children managed the games under the leaders chosen by themselves.

By the outbreak of war in 1914, such schemes as this were operating in a number of large British towns and cities including Norwich, Burnley, Grimsby, Brighton and Plymouth. It should be noted that these schemes were being financed by local authorities who had deemed participation in such athletic pursuits to be desirable.[34]

These nationwide developments reflect the departure in Edwardian Britain from the rigidly-imposed military drill of the nineteenth century, as a growing body of influential physical educators advocated the adoption of Swedish drill and games as therapeutic exercise for the population.[35] However, this is not to say that the influence of the army in the nation's physical training waned during this period. Though a less regimented form of exercise was becoming available to working class children, who were able to supplement this physical education with participation in some team games, army involvement in the sphere of physical training remained very strong. The Board of Education endorsed a joint publication with the War Office in 1902, and this Model Course of Physical Training, together with the army's Infantry Training 1902, was to ensure a military style of exercise for the pupils of the state system of education. Though the model course was revised in 1904, it was not until 1907 that the army finally adopted the system of Swedish gymnastics. With the appointment of one of the army's leading supporters of the Swedish system, Lieut.-Comm. F.H. Grenfell, to the post of H.M. Inspector of Physical Training in 1909, the move away from the outdated principles of Archibald MacLaren's original training manual was ensured.[36]

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[33] 4 August 1914, p.129.

[34] There were no formal guidelines for the provision of such financial support. In the summer of 1914, London provided the sum of 925 pounds to cater for the pupils of its 700 schools; Wolverhampton in the same period raised its grant for the rental of football fields from 20 to 28 pounds. *The Times*, p.129.

[35] McIntosh, P.E. in England, pp.156-169.

Outside the sphere of education, the phenomenal growth of football amongst the working class symbolised the way in which sport was gradually becoming a national pastime, rather than the exclusive preserve of the rich and leisured.[37] As it continued to increase in popularity, and working class teams broke the strangle-hold of the old public schoolboy teams on the F.A. Cup, middle and upper class observers were swift to assign the rationale that 'games built character' to the new working class participants in the sport. This was an essential step towards recognising the sport as being truly England's national game, as it allowed a uniform approach to be adopted to a sport which continued to be radically didvided on issues stemming from class differences well into the First World War.[38] In 1897, for instance, Lord Roseberry commented upon presenting the F.A. Cup that he believed that football had helped foster those "splendid characteristics of the British race - stamina and indomitable pluck".[39] Two years earlier, the *Football World* sports paper greeted the forthcoming soccer season with a distinctly military endorsement for the preservation and celebration of the game:

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[36] McIntosh, P.E. in England, p.158.

[37] Mason examines this social movement in his eighth chapter, "Football and the Workers". A detailed study of the origins and growth of one club is provided by Charles Korr, "West Ham United Football Club and the Beginnings of Professional Football in East London, 1895 - 1914", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.13 (1978), 211-232.

[38] See chapter V, "Physical Training, Team Games and Trench Warfare: Recruitment, the Nation and the War, 1914-1918".

[39] Mason, p.225.

> ...an eminent German military authority...recently offered the opinion that it [football] satisfies a craving which renders conscription unnecessary in this country. It does not make trained soldiers of our young men, it is true, but it enhances in them the spirit of pluck, opposition, competition, never-know-when-they-are-beaten, never-say-die, play up Wednesday or United kind of feeling, which tends to the greatness of our national character. Long live football ![40]

Within the army itself, a similar dual approach towards physical training and games can be detected which demonstrated on the one hand a recognition of the value of team games and athletics for the purpose of character training, whilst at the same time placing gymnastics for therapeutic development at the core of the programme for all recruits. This can be clearly detected in several army publications prior to the war. In the ***Imperial Army Series*** on physical training, for instance, the author concedes that athletic sports and games can be beneficial to improving physique, but makes the point that such pastimes are not systematically controlled, nor are they available to a wide section of the population on a regular enough basis to lead to health and fitness:

> To the mass of the people athletic sports and games are an occasional luxury or altogether denied owing to the want of both means and facilities for practising them. As a result, large numbers of those who still remain interested in various sports and games spend their leisure time watching the performance of a few champions instead of taking part in them regularly....[41]

After citing figures to show that nearly 43% of the 438,641 men who offered to enlist between 1906-11 were rejected on physical grounds, this particular volume continues to advocate "a judicious mingling of games and gymnastic exercises" in order to best prepare the young soldier for a strenuous and demanding military life. In the companion volume, the author once again takes aim at the growing popularity of sports spectating, commenting: "The benefits of athletics are also narrowed by the growing tendency of persons interested in them to sit and watch the performance of a few champions or professional athletes, instead of taking an active part in various sports".[42] Once again, gymnastic exercise and recreational games are the advocated remedies, with instruction and progression provided by the Army Manual of Physical Training.

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[40] 9 September 1895, in Mason, p.225.

[41] E.John Solano, ed., Physical Training (Senior Course) (London: John Murray, 1913), p.4.

Despite the continued official emphasis on the benefits of rigorous and systematic gymnastic training, research suggests that team games had become a regular, familiar and popular pastime in the regiments and battalions of the British army well before 1914. One military historian notes that although a soldier's life was often monotonous and somewhat spartan, "it was in other respects a healthy life, with unlimited opportunities for sport and recreation (neither of them a routine feature in the French and German armies), and the serving soldier of the pre-war period was hard, fit and persuaded that cleanliness came first, and godliness a bad second".[43] The magazine of the Royal Engineers confirms this viewpoint and devotes considerable column space to scores and reports from games of cricket, rugby and football that were being played between the Corp's troops. It also provides evidence that such matches were capable of assuming a role of athletic protocol, for one issue just weeks prior to the outbreak of war carried a report on an 'international' soccer fixture between a Royal Engineers team in Malta and a team of visiting Austrian naval seamen from *S.M.S. Zrinyi*: "Our Austrian friends proved to be quite a keen lot of sportsmen and made a great fight for honours, but a well contested game ended in a draw, one goal each".[44]

Football's contributions to army efforts of international goodwill were conscientiously copied on the home front. The enormous popularity of the game in the final quarter of the nineteenth century had wrenched it firmly away from the exclusive control of the universities and public schools and placed it within the grasp of all sports-loving Englishmen, regardless of class or education. Officers and men were thus able to share a common enthusiasm in the comradeship and competition afforded all players by a good, manly game of soccer. As Sir

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[42] E.John Solano, ed., Physical Training (Junior Course) (London: John Murray, 1913), p.5.
[43] David Ascoli, The Mons Star. The British Expeditionary Force 5th.August - 22nd.November 1914 (London: Harrap, 1981), p.26.
[44] *Sapper*, July 1914, p.325.

John Fortescue points out in his History of the British Army, however, those observing this new trend within the armed forces foresaw greater benefits resulting from such interaction than mere good natured enjoyment, reasoning that "in the British Army an officer who has led his men to victory in a football match will be the more devotedly followed by them in a sterner field".[45] Another historian of the regular British army in 1914 makes the comment that officers and men "met on the field of sport, for an officer who did not play games with the men was immediately suspect".[46] These observations are confirmed by an article in the *Cavalry Journal* in 1913, in which the author stated: "officers and N.C.O.s must join in games, sports, and competions with their men so as to earn respect for themselves for what they can do rather than for their rank. Games and sport promote a healthy tone in the squadron barrack and a keen but friendly rivalry in the Army".[47] This use of games to foster goodwill and military efficiency between officers and men was celebrated as a uniquely British trait by Major-General Scott-Moncrief in an after-dinner speech at the 2nd. A.G.M. of the Royal Engineers Old Comrades Association, when he told the assembled guests that in their Corp:

> ...there was not only unity of thought and feeling with regard to duty, but also unity of feeling with regard to the corps and with regard to the sports which they carried out. In foreign armies they cannot understand this sort of thing. They cannot understand why a captain of a company on parade should give orders to his men, and then when he comes into the cricket field he takes orders from the captain of the cricket eleven, who may be a sapper or a lance-corporal; but he obeys orders with regard to the place in which he has got to field or the time when he has to take his turn to stand against the bowling as the corporal obeys the captain on parade. We find a comradeship which is in every sense of the word a valuable national asset.[48]

The General's comments may serve as a timely summary of the changes wrought in the social fabric of British sport during the late Victorian and early twentieth century periods. Whilst there were undoubtedly still many legacies of injustice, discrimination and unequal opportunity within the arena of British sport, physical training and exercise had been extended to a far greater section of the population in order to derive largely physical benefits. Games had similarly permeated the nation and were seen to elevate the participant on a more metaphysical plane. Quite evidently, the extension of such sports and games had been accompanied by a parallel dissemination of the values of athleticism, such that the moral dividends held to shape the character of the young man were no longer the exclusive preserve of the public schoolboy, but were eagerly assigned to the factory worker, the state schoolboy and the army recruit. Sport, then, had become an athletic adjunct to warfare in the minds of a large cross-section of the population by 1914 by benefit of its widely lauded physical and metaphysical capabilities. As Sir Ernest Barker, the Principal of Kings College, Oxford, pointed out in a rather self-congratulatory passage written in 1927, drawn from his Stevenson Lecture addresses in Glasgow in 1925-26, the "unwritten code" of the public schools had disseminated far beyond their playing fields, and had influenced the nation in its preparation for the war to come:

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[45] Turner, p.238.
[46] Tim Carew, The Vanished Army (London: William Kimber, 1964), p.219.
[47] 'Xenophon II', "Character Training", *Cavalry Journal* (January 1913), pp.1-4.
[48] *Sapper*, May 1914, p.269.

> The education given at public schools may seem, at first sight, to be confined to a narrow class, and therefore limited in the range of its national influence. There are, however, two things which we must remember. In the first place, the inherent influence of the public schools and the older universities has affected thousands who have never themselves been members of either. Their code was one of the most definite things in the nineteenth century; it was carried into public places and institutions - the Army, Parliament, the Civil Service of the Crown - by men who also carried prestige, and it was a leaven which largely worked on the general mass.[49]

Clearly, it had become a respectable and familiar salve that sports and games could be used in a variety of situations to achieve a number of desirable ends, not the least of which for military purposes were physical fitness and health, capacity for leadership, courage, co-operation, moral strength, loyalty and fervent patriotism. The forthcoming role of sport in the Great War was therefore destined to be not an erratic British response that had little or no social heritage but rather the product of almost seventy years' educational, ideological and social interaction with sports and games on the one hand, and the concept of warfare on the other. Thrust into the furnace of war in August 1914, this athletic alliance of social and military values would be tempered and tested as never before.

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[49] Ernest Barker, National Character and the Factors in its Formation, 4th. Edition (London: Methuen & Co., 1948), p.234. The "unwritten code" referred to by the author is earlier defined as "To play the game fairly according to its rules; to play for the side, and not for your own hand; to play to the end of the hardest-fought struggle without slackening effort till the whistle blows; to fear sentiment; to hate exaggeration, to let your highest praise be 'Not bad' and your worse blame 'A poor sort' - these are some of the rules of the unwritten code", p.233.

Chapter V

PHYSICAL TRAINING, TEAM GAMES AND TRENCH WARFARE : RECRUITMENT, THE NATION AND THE WAR, 1914-1918

The plan had been methodically and painstakingly calculated over a period of several years. In the event of a European conflict, three German armies would by-pass the French fortifications of the Maginot line, sweep close to the Channel coastline and then swing back to the west of Paris, encapsulating and eliminating the French troops who had been drawn into the mousetrap-like pocket of Alsace-Lorraine. This, reasoned von Schlieffen, the architect of the plan, would bring France to her knees in just 39 days, thus releasing the German divisions to turn their attentions to their eastern border with Russia. One year after the old Count's death, when the spirit, if not the letter, of this strategy was enacted in the early hours of 4 August 1914, it had a further effect which few of the German General Staff had seriously envisaged. German invasion of Belgium territory violated a treaty signed in 1839 by which her neutrality was assured. After brief deliberation, the British government declared war on Germany at 11:00 p.m. that night, thus honouring a pledge to maintain Belgian sovereignty made in the British name by Lord Palmerston some seventy five years earlier. Four divisions of the British Expeditionary Force were mobilized and landed in France between 9-17 August under the command of Sir John French. A fifth division arrived on 20 August and the whole contingent moved forward to take up their agreed position between Le Cateau and Maubeuge on the left flank of the French fifth army. From this time on until the middle of November the core of the British regular army, the 'Old Contemptibles' as they were affectionately known, were continuously engaged in either fighting or marching in an exhausting and costly campaign which eventually resulted in the deadlocked entrenchment of both forces along a 590 mile front from the English Channel to the Swiss frontier.[1]

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[1] These opening months of the war, so vitally important and yet so different in character to the later years, are admirably described and analysed in David Ascoli's The Mons Star; further

Four years of bloody stalemate and attrition were to follow before the Armistice of 1918 would end the conflict that was to cost the British Empire alone more than one million lives.

Sport's involvement with the nation at war was immediate and extensive. This chapter will consider its impact on British society during the war years, highlighting its prominent, but intricate relationship with the press, the army and the education system. Its place at the forefront of British consciousness in a time of national crisis will be examined, as will the arguments and theories used by groups and individuals to sustain sport in this position of unusual eminence. Before the study continues to examine its role in Britain between the years of 1914-1918, however, some preliminary attention should be given to an analysis of what exactly is the phenomenon being observed.

At present, no differentiating framework exists for a comparative analysis of sport's interrelationship with a society at war. Thus, an effort has been made here to establish some distinguishing characteristics so that it may be more fully investigated and more thoroughly understood. Three categories have been identified for the purposes of this study. The first of these is a simple division delineated by physical tangibility - a recognition that during the course of the war, a number of sports events took place under the auspices of the armed forces, both in England and overseas on the various wartime fronts. The occurrence of these sports days, impromptu games meetings, organised competitions and formal gymkhanas is widely documented, and reference will be made to many of them as this study progresses. Division of the remaining material into two further classes is a more complicated process and from the outset it should be made clear that the categories defined are neither mutually exclusive, nor are they intended to be the final word in such a delineation of historical material. Nevertheless, it is hoped that they will serve as tools of some convenience. Having already defined the first category as being physically and historically validated examples of sports events in the First World War, it is proposed that the two remaining sections will be drawn from the medium of the written word, be it fiction, journalism, poetry, autobiography or philosophical text. The

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[1](cont'd)illumination can be added by a reading of Tim Carew's The Vanished Army, in which an account of the campaign is drawn from personal interviews with survivors.

determining factor which shall divide the material will be the presence of what Berger and Luckmann call *legitimation* - the "process of 'explaining' and 'justifying'" an event or occurrence in order to validate it to a wider group of individuals.[2] The authors define four separate levels of legitimation within society; for the purposes of this study, such a detailed theoretical analysis will not be necessary. Instead, the framework to be adopted will simply attempt to distinguish between the legitimation of sport during the First World War, whereby explanatory schemes or specific theories are advanced to account for, justify or deny sport's contribution to the British war effort; and non-legitimating examples of sport and war, in which sport is used as a metaphor or analogy for an incident in the context of the war. In this manner it is believed that the ideological extension of the values of athleticism can be traced throughout the course of the war without being confused with examples of mere rhetoric involving the imagery and language of sports and team games.[3]

To illustrate the benefit of adopting such a framework, several examples can be profitably considered. During the opening weeks of the war, first-hand reports of the fighting drawn from letters posted home were much in demand by press and public alike. The following passages are some of the many similar expressions that can be found throughout the war years. In *The Times*, a letter from a member of a Scottish Highland regiment told of a German attack in which: "They came up like a football crowd leaving Hampden Park"; Private Whittaker of the Coldstream Guards wrote: "The Germans rushed at us like a crowd streaming from a cup-tie at the Crystal Palace".[4] Clearly, both statements are not attempting to legitimate or theorise about the interrelationship of sport and war but are merely using the mental picture of an experience familiar to the writer to convey an image to the reader who has shared that same experience. It is an attempt to communicate form in the medium of the written word using the common bond of the football crowd image. The thin, but crucially important dividing line between a legitimating and non-legitimating statement can be illustrated by juxtaposing the following two passages, both of which concern an identical wartime scenario in which troops withstand grenade attacks from the enemy:

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[2] Peter L.Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1967), pp.110-113.

[3] This approach is in accord with the work of L.B.Brown, who states that ideologies "...must be deduced from communications designed to influence our attitudes and behaviour. Such communications are to be found in newspapers, television programs or sermons...Their clearest forms of expression are linguistic and so an ideology is an integrated set of propositions about some important social area or domain. Verbally-based measures are therefore appropriate for their study", Ideology (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p.10. He continues "Ideologies are communicated in the materials of popular culture", p.12.

[4] Both from *The Times*, 11 September 1914, p.6.

> Some of the men started picking up the bombs and throwing them back - there was just time to do it if you were quick and caught them like a cricketer - until the Turks grew cunning and cut short the fuse, when one of the gallant excited youngsters had his hand blown off by the bomb he was throwing back.[5]
>
> - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
>
> ...steadiness of nerve, sound judgement, a true eye, as well as physical agility, which are all necessary to make a good cricketer, must prove useful in time of war. I was talking to a great cricketer the other day, fresh from the Front, who said: "A lot of our fellows would escape wounds if they would only keep cool in the trenches, watch the missiles more closely - such as trench mortars, grenades and rum jars - and calculate where they are going to drop, and after a little experience, you can practically do so".[6]

On the surface, both passages are using a cricketing analogy to describe the actions and events of war. However, by identifying the latter passage as a legitimating statement, it can be seen clearly that the author is not only inferring that cricket is an admirable preparation for war, but that in the context of the fighting described, war shares many physical dimensions with the game of cricket. This is reiterated to an even greater extent in the following lines from the same source:

> In a charge, too, how useful is a boxing man's or a footballer's previous experience. Frank Slavin, the Australian ex-heavyweight champion who is over here serving...said the other day "The practice of boxing will prove to be of invaluable assistance to bayonet-fighting especially...for every little trick and artifice used by the boxer can be usefully applied to that part of a rifle which is

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[5] Captain C.E.W.Bean, Official Press Representative with the Australian Forces at Gallipoli, in *The Times*, 7 October 1915, p.7.

[6] John Astley Cooper, "The British Imperial Spirit of Sport and the War", *The Royal Colonial Institute Journal*, vol.7, no.9 (September 1916), pp.583-4. My thanks to Katharine Moore for making this material available to me.

so valuable a weapon at close quarters."[7]

The delineation of such evidence on a basis of linguistics allows a fuller understanding to be reached concerning sport in the First World War. On the one hand it indicates the fallaciousness of suggesting that all use of sporting terminology is an ultimate expression of the martial values assigned to athleticism.[8] On the other, it illustrates the extent to which the language of sports and team games had permeated the British vocabulary and this in itself is a significant factor - Private Whittaker and his Highlander comrade-at-arms might have equally used the analogy of workers streaming home through the factory gates at the end of the day, surely an identically familiar sight to author and reader, but both chose to adopt a sporting metaphor instead.[9] This close critical analysis of socio-linguistics can therefore beneficially illuminate and differentiate between different levels of ideological commitment to the credo of athleticism.[10] When viewed in conjunction with those sporting events which took place during the war, this analytical framework will aid in identifying the legitimating element in the discourse surrounding such physical actions. The majority of the material examined in this study will fall into this category from this point forward.

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[7] Cooper, p.584; curiously, a picture of Slavin featuring him as a *Canadian* appears in *The War Illustrated*, 3 June 1916, p.30.

[8] The fact that Edmund Blunden notes that soldiers called trench mortar shells 'footballs', for instance, cannot be taken to signify that playing football would benefit the bomb thrower in time of war, or that war possessed identical qualities to a game of football. Once again, it is a non-legitimating transfer of image to describe the unfamiliar. Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War (London : Cobden-Sanderson, 1930), p.109.

[9] This is an area of sports history which would definitely benefit from further research. Noelle Bisseret would explain the phenomenon thus: "The dominant class becomes the social referent for the gradual reorganisation of signifiers. It sets up its own language habits (a sign of its supposed natural superiority) as an absolute standard". This then has the effect of influencing non-members to alter and adapt their own language patterns to imitate those of the dominant group. Noelle Bisseret, Education, Class Language and Ideology (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1979), p.67.

[10] The relationship between legitimation and ideology is given consideration in several leading sociological texts. In particular, Kinloch states "Ideologies function to legitimate particular group interests..." and continues to endorse Seliger's definition of ideologies as "...belief systems designed to serve a particular group of people by justifying 'concerted action for the preservation, reform, destruction, or reconstruction of a given order' through certain moral norms, limited evidence and technical prescriptions". Language attempts to structure the "auditory environment" of the individual, and thus plays a crucial role in the ideological process. Graham Kinloch, Ideology and Contempory Sociological Theory (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp.6-11.

With the advantage afforded by hindsight, British reactions to the declaration of war appear absurdly naive. Few conceived of the forthcoming magnitude and duration of the conflict; popular opinion held, in fact, that the war would be over by Christmas.[11] Among the volunteers who surged to the recruitment offices to sign up for Kitchener's 'new' armies there were often those who expressed an eagerness to accelerate their passage to France, for fear of 'missing' the war.[12] Amongst the higher echelons of military command, however, there were murmurs of disquietening unease that did not augur well for the future. Kitchener commented to Foreign Secretary Grey on the turn of events in France that had resulted in the deadlocked entrenchment of both sides: "I don't know what is to be done. This isn't war", while Sir John French later pondered: "I cannot help wondering why none of us realised what the modern rifle, the machine gun, motor traction, the aeroplane, and wireless telegraphy would bring about".[13] Few had the vision to foresee the awful reality of what was in store, although one writer in a highly perceptive letter to *The Times* wrote with prophetic insight:

> Personal heroism, the heroism of individual brawn and boldness will achieve little opportunity. The range of weapons and modern tactics have set the struggle on the basis of mathematics....This is to be a war in which Death will keep tally on automatic adding machines. Past military experiences will furnish slight guidance. It demands new rules and new tools.[14]

Despite this sombre warning, it was those very qualities of "individual brawn and boldness" inherent in the nation's sportsmen that became the focal point of the army's recruiting drive.

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[11] Guy Chapman remembers clearly: "We were all pretty unsophisticated. There was still something of the belief that it was all a game"; Vain Glories, p.xi.

[12] Carew, p.56.

[13] Both quoted in Llewellyn Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918 (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), p.39.

[14] Herbert Kaufman, "The Silent Briton - An American Tribute", *The Times*, 19 August 1914, p.8.

The Times was undoubtedly the staunchest ally of this drive and in a remarkable display of ambiguity, published the following poem with its sporting exhortations to military excellence on the very same day as the previous letter:

> Lad, with the merry smile and the eyes
> Quick as hawk's and clear as the day,
> You, who have counted the game the prize,
> Here is the game of games to play.
> Never a goal - the captains say -
> Matches the one that's needed now :
> Put the old blazer and cap away -
> England's colours await your brow.[15]

The sentiments and language of Vernede's poem, with its references to blazers, caps and colours, were calculated to appeal to the high-spirited, games-playing ex-public schoolboys who had been reared on the military expectations embodied in the code of athleticism. Such young men were in immediate demand by the army, who offered all public school and university men an immediate commission for the duration of the war.[16] *The Times* encouraged these young men to come forward, appealing to its own readership: "All Varsity men, Old Public School Boys - men who are hardened to the soldiers' life by strenuous pursuit of sport should enlist at once".[17] The public school and university men responded to the nation's plight with alacrity. Some 37,000 students or Old Boys were swiftly commissioned in the opening weeks of the war.[18] Of these, more than 20,500 had previous Officer Training Corp experience and were characterised by one of their commanding officers thus:

> They are the figures of British youth with the principles of honour, manhood, justice and courage instilled into them, and with a very real idea of what

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[15] R.E.Vernede, "The Call", *The Times*, 19 August 1914, p.7.
[16] *T.P.'s Weekly*, vol.24, no.614 (15 August 1914), p.227.
[17] Quoted in James Walvin, The People's Game. A Social History of British Football (London: Allen Lane, 1975), p.89.
[18] Pound, p.29.

> sacrifices of ease and luxury and possibly of life are demanded today.[19]

The formation of these essential characteristics was naturally attributed, if only in part, to the football field, as the author conceded: "even today there are amongst us those who really imagine that Wellington trained his officers between the goalposts".[20] The contribution of the public school men, however, did not extend solely into the officer corps. As early as 18 August one 'Old Haileyburian' suggested that collecting old public schoolboys together into units would circumvent valuable training time being wasted on the inculcation of qualities already present amongst their numbers: "Such companies would from the first possess that cohesion and spirit of mutual confidence and pride in their corp which it is one of the main purposes of military training to instil".[21] A.A.David of Rugby School encouraged fellow public school men to enlist in the ranks rather than wait for a commission, reasoning there was "a splendid opportunity of giving a lead to young men of all classes. Here, also, is a supreme test of school spirit and character". With the sanctioning of 'Pals' Battalions' for integration into Kitchener's armies, whereby groups of friends, relatives, workmates or fellow team players could all enlist and serve together, the way lay open for the formation of a Public Schools Battalion. Within days of its being announced, 1,950 ex-public school and university men had enlisted - enough to form not one, but two battalions - in order to serve alongside their peers. A reporter pointed out "They are all of the well-to-do-class, and are paying their own expenses", and noted that most wore their old school caps or colours as they paraded from Hyde Park to Victoria Station, *en route* to Epsom Downs for training.[22] Their dutiful and enthusiastic patriotism was celebrated in "The Recruits" by I.Gregory Smith:

> O! Hearts ever youthful, like schoolboys at play
> So be it with you in the thick of the fray;

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[19] Alan R. Haig-Brown, The O.T.C. and the Great War, p.83.
[20] Haig-Brown, p.93.
[21] *The Times*, 18 August 1914, p.4.
[22] *The Times*, 11 September 1914, p.5.

> In the crash and the smoke and the roar of the fight
> Be it yours, if it need be, to die for the Right![23]

The 'Sportsman's Battalion' of the Royal Fusiliers actually advertised for recruits to its ranks, specifying that they should be between 19 and 35 years old and from "upper and middle classes only". An entrance fee of three guineas was charged to each successful applicant.[24]

The patriotic zeal exhibited by the public school fraternity was matched by many of the nation's sporting organisations, who curtailed their seasons and fixtures in order to encourage enlistment amongst their members. Early in September Mr. Philip Collins, Vice-President of the Hockey Association and Chairman of the England Selection Committee suggested that all coming matches should be abandoned as this would realise some 40,000 able-bodied men for military service.[25] Two days later, all rugby clubs in Kent were asked by their association to scratch their fixtures and encourage players to join up.[26] The following day, the Rugby Football Union announced its intention of forming a unit of rugby players to fight in France, and in a column headed "Patriotism Before Sport" invited volunteers who wished to carry arms with associates from the rugby fraternity to send an application to Twickenham, the traditional home of English international rugby football.[27] Their Irish national team counterparts joined up with the 7th.Battalion, Dublin Fusiliers amidst a similar flurry of enthusiastic press coverage.[28] Many amateur football associations decided to cancel all fixtures during the war on the grounds that it "would be desecrating their playing fields to use them for sport at such a time."[29] Such demonstrations of patriotic intent, deemed entirely in accord with the traditional response of the English sporting gentleman, were celebrated as essential sacrifices necessary for the successful defence of the realm. A suitably vociferous expression of outrage occurred, therefore, when the Football Association announced that their programme of professional league games would not be curtailed in spite of the national emergency.[30] In the often bitter debate that followed this revelation, decades of controversy surrounding the growth and development of the game of football were brought to light and aired in the convenient cause of national unity.

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[23] *The Times*, 15 September 1914. Despite the enthusiasm that surrounded their formation, one soldier at least casts a different light on their reception at the front in 1915: "They were very decent chaps but hopeless as soldiers; the only thing they ever became proficient in was swearing. Their mail was always twice as large as the rest of the Brigade's put together". There were, however, some redeeming qualities. After the Public Schools Battalion had been "practically annihilated" at High Wood on the Somme, the author's unit were the recipients of food parcels from home that had arrived for public school casualties. He remembers clearly "We lived on luxuries for the next few days". Frank Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p.154; 192.

[24] Pound, p.113.

[25] *The Times*, 2 September 1914, p.3.

[26] *The Times*, 4 September 1914, p.10.

[27] *The Times*, 5 September 1914, p.12.

[28] *The Times*, 18 September 1914.

The game of football had diffused liberally through the social strata of British society following the formation of the Football Association in 1863, and had been swiftly adopted by the working classes of the industrial heartlands of England. This social diffusion brought with it ethical and ideological turmoil for those players and administrators who had been reared on the game in the closeted environments of the nation's public schools. Under the tenets of athleticism, they had been taught to value, in Vernede's words, "the game the prize", rather than the result. Football, like other team games, was to be played in a spirit of sportsmanlike good conduct, where rivalry was good-natured and the quality of the match surpassed the final score in importance. The vast intrusion into the game of the lower classes, bringing with them unwelcome novelties such as partisan supporters, lack of sportsmanship and the ultimate bane of the amateur gentleman ethos - the *professional* footballer - was held to be totally detrimental to the progress and practice of football.[31] It was from those sympathetic with this line of argument that the wartime criticisms largely stem, for they represented a section of the population who felt that their values and their game were being undermined by a challenge from the new working men's brand of soccer.[32] The decision taken by the F.A. to continue professional league soccer was thus swiftly branded as an almost treasonable offence, quite against the grain of national unity.

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[29] H.W.Wilson and J.A.Hammerton, eds., *The Great War. The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict*, vol.2 (1915), p.118.

[30] An identical controversy in Australia is the subject of Michael McKearnan's "Sport, War and Society : Australia 1914-1918", in Sport in Australia: Selected Readings in Physical Activity (Sydney, McGraw-Hill, 1976) .

[31] These were the roots of the controversy which split the F.A. into rival factions during the Edwardian years, and the organisation only recovered its unity in the year prior to the First World War. It is also interesting to note that equally antagonistic claims were made against the "professional gladiators" of the U.S. Olympic team in Stockholm, 1912. John Lucas, The Modern Olympic Games (New York: A.S.Barnes & Co., 1980), pp.91-95.

The first shot in the exchange was fired by the *Evening News*, which announced the curtailment of its sports paper section (circulation 50,000) in a column headed "Duty Before Sport" :

> This is no time for football. This nation, this Empire has got to occupy itself with more serious business. The young men who play football and the young men who look on have better work to do. The trumpet calls them, their country calls them, the heroes in the trenches call them. They are summoned to leave their sport, and to take part in the great game. That game is war, for life or death.[33]

Renouncing football and enlisting to 'play the greater game' for King and country shot to disproportionate prominence in the early months of the war. Recruitment for Kitchener's 'New Armies' was based exclusively on a voluntary basis. Consequently, a vocal minority saw it as expedient to the national effort that the Football Association should be forced to abandon its programme of games, and encourage players and spectators alike to sign up. The responses from the amateur clubs and associations only served to embitter the 'unpatriotic' stance of the professional footballers. Perhaps the most notable contribution on this topic was penned by none other than the redoubtable cricketer, Dr.W.G.Grace, who noted that professional cricket, too, should give way to more serious matters:

> The fighting on the Continent is very severe and will probably be prolonged. I think the time has arrived when the county cricket season should be closed, for it is not fitting at a time like the present that able-bodied men should play day

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[32] Mason, p.222. The background to this controversy is more fully discussed in C.Veitch, "Play up! Play up! And Win the War! Football, the Nation and the First World War, 1914-15" (Paper presented to the British History Seminar, Department of History, University of Alberta, 14 March 1984).

[33] *The Times*, 3 September 1914, p.6.

after day, and pleasure seekers look on.[34]

Conscious of its somewhat delicate position in the limelight of the nation's press, the Football Association put its complete administrative structure at the disposal of the War Office, and offered the use of all league club grounds for the purpose of recruitment and training. It was announced that Glasgow would form a battalion of football players and followers, and that recruiting rallies would be held at soccer grounds during the half-time interval on match days. One poster displayed at a London ground encouraged fans with the words:

> Do you want to be a
> Chelsea Die-Hard?
> If so
> Join the 17th Battalion
> Middlesex Regiment
> 'The Old Die-Hards'
> And follow the lead given
> by your favourite Football Players.[35]

These acts, however, were insufficient to quell the protests, which reached a sensational peak on 8 September when one F.N.Charrington, an East End Temperence worker, sent a telegram to the King, asking for the playing of football to be banned during the war. Earlier that year, George V had been the first reigning monarch to attend a Cup Final, and had also become the honorary patron of the Football Association. In a diplomatically-worded reply, the King's Personal Secretary told Charrington: "...the doings of the Association will be carefully followed having regard to the King's position as its patron".[36] Undeterred, and convinced of the validity of his cause, Charrington attended the Fulham club's next home game, and in attempting to cause a disturbance, was set upon by two over-zealous club officials at half-time.[37] Undoubtedly, he was not alone in his condemnation of the continuation of league soccer, as is revealed by an entry for 16 December in the diary of a young journalist that year:

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[34] *T.P.'s Weekly*, vol.24, no.618 (12 September 1914), p.316.
[35] Walvin, p.89.
[36] *The Times*, 8 September 1914, p.4. Both telegrams are reproduced in full in *The Great War*, vol.2 (1915), p.145.

> Going to football matches in the old days we used to be confronted with evangelical posters greatly concerned for our eternal welfare, asking us, among other questions, "Are you prepared to meet your God?" and bidding us "Repent, for the time is at hand". In these days the posters carried by a line of sandwich-men, walking up and down before the gates of the Chelsea ground, ask the crowds such questions as "Are you forgetting that there's a war on?", "Your Country Needs You", "Be Ready to Defend Your Home and Women from the German Huns". So far as I could notice, little attention was given to these skeletons at the feast. Inside the ground there was excitement and uproar.[38]

Incidents such as these appear to have toughened the resolve of the Management Committee of the league, who stated: "The committee are even more decidedly of the opinion that in the interests of the people of this country, football ought to be continued".[39] The defiant stance of the F.A. was a source of considerable disappointment to the army's recruiting officers:

> It has a moral effect...These professional footballers of England are the pick of the country for fitness. Nobody has a right to say that any body of men are not doing their duty, and there may be excellent domestic reasons why every one of these thousands of players does not enlist. But when the young men week after week see the finest physical manhood of the country expending its efforts kicking a ball about, they can't possibly realise there is a call for every fit man at the front.[40]

and the controversy was fuelled by the publication in the same issue of the following poem. A close reading of the first stanza in particular reveals the poet's bias:

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[37] *The Times*, 8 September 1914, p.4.

[38] Michael MacDonagh, In London During the Great War. The Diary of a Journalist (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1935), p.44.

[39] *The Times*, 8 September 1914, p.4.

[40] *The Times*, 24 November 1914, p.5.

Come, leave the lure of the football field
With its fame so lightly won,
And take your place in a greater game
Where worthier deeds are done.
No game is this where thousands watch
The play of a chosen few;
But rally all! if you're men at all,
There's room in the team for you.

You may find your place in the battle-front
If you'd play the forward game,
To carry the trench and man the guns
With dash and deadly aim.
O, the field is wide, and the foe is strong,
And it's far from wing to wing,
But we'll carry through, and it's there that you
May shoot for your flag and King.

Will you play your part in the middle line
Where our airmen bear the brunt,
Who break the plan of the foe's attack
And rally the men in front?
A bold assault and a sure defence
In their game they will combine;
And there's honour too awaiting you
If you'll play in the middle line.

And, last of all, you may find a place
Perchance of less reknown,
Where a willing arm may save the game
If the first defence breaks down.
So while others serve in the far-off front
Or out on the deadly foam,
Will you not enrol to keep the goal
And fight for your hearth and home!

Then leave for a while the football field
And the lure of the flying ball
Lest it dull your ear to the voice you hear
When your King and country call.
Come join the ranks of our hero sons
In the wider field of fame,
Where the God of Right will watch the fight
And referee the game.[41]

A shorter, and openly sardonic poem of the same sentiments had appeared earlier that week, complete with explanatory heading:

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[41] "The Game" by A.Lochhead, *The Times*, 24 November 1914, p.9.

"Professionalism as Usual"
[The Football Cup Competitions are to proceed as usual - Daily Paper]

Two-and-twenty fighting men
Fit as fit can be
Kick the football, though the war
Is fought on land and sea.
"Play as usual", run and kick,
Though the foemen land,
Goals must be defended still
If Britain is to stand.[42]

The Times reported in a bitter tone that recruitment drives at football league matches were having dismal results, despite large crowds. On Saturday 21 November only six volunteers came forward from the crowd at the game between Cardiff and Bristol Rovers, while at the Arsenal ground in London, a call for recruits yielded only one man.[43] It was noted that there was a "growing feeling that professional and spectacular football is incompatible with successful recruiting".[44] These observations ignored the fact that the month of November had been a highly successful one for the nation in recruiting terms. More than 160,000 men had come forward, a substantial increase over the months of September and October.[45] This would tend to suggest that the youth of the nation were quite willing to come forward and serve the nation in its hour of need, but chose not to enlist at the football grounds, where they went for recreation and a brief respite from the war. Such a line of reasoning was quite overlooked by the opponents of war-time football.

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[42] *T.P.'s Weekly*, vol.24, no.628 (21 November 1914), p.561.
[43] *The Times*, 23 November 1914, p.6.
[44] *The Times*, 30 November 1914, p.5.
[45] John Osborne, The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain, 1914-1916 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), Appendix I.

Whilst this thinly-veiled struggle between the values and expectations of two polarised social classes was continuing to gain attention, there were more conciliatory attempts being made to persuade the youth of the nation that their footballing skills were an advantageous preparation for war. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, in his enormously influential unofficial training manual for the war, wrote that new recruits must be taught:

> ...from the first that they are like...players in a football team: each has to be perfect and efficient, each has to adhere patiently to the rules and to play in his place and play the game - not for his own advancement or glorification, but simply and solely that at all costs his side may win.[46]

Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, too, chose to remain aloof from what had become a dispute of distinctly acidic rhetoric, and in his appeal adopted reason in preference to rancour:

> I cast no stones. The men who play football, cricket and other games are our finest specimens of British manhood. I put it to them to consider - they are fit, strong, healthy and as sportsmen they are cheery; health makes vigour, cheeriness makes pluck - I put it to them that we must now all be prepared to stand by our country and to suffer for our country.[47]

While this situation remained unresolved, the troops in France prepared to spend their first Christmas in the trenches with little sign of the hostilities easing in deference to the occasion. However, on Christmas Eve along several stretches of the Flanders front, curious festive scenes began to take place. German soldiers were observed setting up a Christmas tree complete with lights on their parapet, and were soon heard singing and joking in their trenches.[48] Even more remarkable was the scene on Christmas morning when German soldiers clambered out into no-man's land unarmed and encouraged the British soldiers to join them in a jubilant, spontaneous and totally unofficial truce. As the soldiers from both armies fraternized, exchanging food, souveniers, cap badges and buttons, some of the most incredible sporting scenes in the war took place - in at least two places along the front footballs were produced and impromptu matches started up between the German and British soldiers. A soldier in the Bedfordshire Regiment initiated one game in which teams of about fifty a side played until the ball snagged and punctured on the barbed wire that had been designated as one of the goal lines.[49] In the sector of the London Rifle Brigade another game was observed in the vicinity of Hill 60, where one member of the British forces is reputed to have found amongst the German ranks his former hairdresser, who played on the same local soccer team in Liverpool before the war.[50] All was not exactly quiet on the Western Front that day, however, and a proposed soccer game between the 2nd. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and their German opponants was cancelled due to shells falling in their sector.[51]

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[46] Sir R.Baden-Powell, Quick Training for War. A Few Practical Suggestions Illustrated by Diagrams (London : Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1914), p.102. In September 1914 alone, this book sold over 50,000 copies in three impressions.
[47] *The Great War*, vol.2 (1915), p.117.
[48] John Terraine, "Christmas 1914, and After", p.784.

Such scenes were not to re-occur during the remaining years of the war and were certainly frowned upon by the military authorities on both sides of no-man's land. Stern memos forbidding any such incident were issued and severe punishments threatened for any offenders.[52] In the light of the prominence of football in the national eye at this stage of the war, it is interesting to note that not only did the press fail to make any political capital out of these incidents, but that the national press surveyed in this study failed to mention the Christmas frivolity at all. It would appear that there was a total news blackout on the affair, perhaps to protect the senior staff of the army from a searching enquiry, or possibly to protect the treasured image of 'Tommy Atkins' as the stalwart enemy of the Teuton foe. Certainly, the coverage of the 'inter-enemy' football games would have been something of a knell of doom for those who had been so vociferous in their condemnation of professional soccer, and those who advocated football as an essential ingredient in the training of the Briton to overcome the Germans on the battlefield.

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[49] Terraine, p.785; D.Winter, "Time Off from Conflict: Christmas 1914", p.43.
[50] Terraine, quoting from an unidentified source, p.785.
[51] Terraine, p.785.
[52] Winter, p.43.

Professional football finally fell into line on 24 April 1915. The 'Khaki Cup Final' was played at the Old Trafford ground in Manchester between Chelsea and Sheffield United, the latter club winning by the only goal of the game. As he presented the cup and medals to the teams, Lord Derby effectively closed the debate on war-time professional soccer with the words: "You have played with one another and against one another for the Cup; play with one another for England now".[53] Thus ended eight months consternation for the patriotic British reading public.[54] As Mason suggests, it must have been with some considerable relief that the news was broadcast later that year that the men of the First Battalion of the 18th.London Regiment had gone into action at Loos, led by men kicking a football.[55] At last Britain's national game could claim total concord with the war effort, without the skeleton of active professional soccer at home in the cupboard. This was a far more desirable image - the British sportsman-soldier leading the fight against the Hun - and it undoubtedly quietened the former critics. It also set the tone for future British war-reporting, which embraced the national sporting stereotype with renewed vigour.[56] Nevertheless, the furore over the continuation of the game during the early months of the war had highlighted the Victorian legacy of intense social differentiation within the nation, particularly in regard to attitudes towards and valuation of team games and their contribution to the formation of national character. In particular, it reveals the extent to which the most vocal of the critics - especially those who raised their objections within the columns of *The Times* - distorted the situation to give credence to their assault on what was essentially an attack on their comprehension of the working class ethos of sport. Their tirades ignored the fact that the vast majority of working class soccer was amateur, and that many of the more than 300,000 players registered with amateur teams had

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[53] Quoted in several sources, including W.J.Baker, p.207.

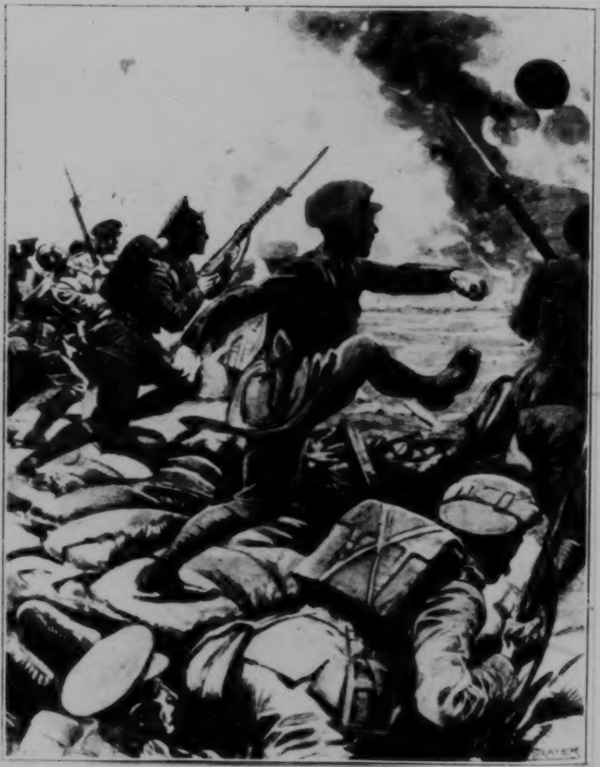
[54] Although the *The War Illustrated* published Sir Owen Seaman's poem, "To a False Patriot" as late as 25 December 1915, which opened with the following lines: "He came obedient to the call / He might have shirked like half his mates / Who, while their comrades fight and fall, / Still go to swell the football gates".

[55] Mason, p.255. The incident was commemorated with an artist's impression of the event in *The War Illustrated*, 30 October 1915, p.264.

[56] See chapter VI, "Gallant Britons and Barbaric Huns: Sport and British Propaganda in the First World War".

Plate III

Gallant Officer scores a Goal on the Field of War



"Gallant Officer scores a Goal on the Field of War" - Loos, 1915.

already enlisted in the forces.[57] They paid scant attention to claims by the Football Association that they were employing only 5,000 professionals, of whom 2,000 were already with the forces, and only a further 600 were unmarried, and thereby eligible for enlistment.[58] In their blind indignation, they also ignored a plea from the men in the trenches - who they were ostensibly supporting by their protests - for football to be continued, as it provided a welcome respite from the drudgery of war.[59] Although the Football Association's claim that their organisation had recruited 500,000 men by the end of 1914 remains unsubstantiated, there is little doubt that their administrative machinery was of invaluable assistance to the War Office in the early months of the war.[60] Once again, this received little acknowledgement from the self-appointed patriotic protesters who saw the continuation of the game as the ultimate national evil. In view of this, there would appear to be some justification in the equally antagonistic claims of the *Athletic News*, which spoke out strongly in support of the professionals:

> The whole agitation is nothing less than an attempt by the classes to stop the recreation on one day in the week of the masses...What do they care for the poor man's sport? The poor are giving their lives for this country in thousands. In many cases they have nothing else...there are those who could bear arms, but who have to stay at home and work for the Army's requirements, and the country's needs. These should, according to a small clique of virulent snobs, be deprived of the one distraction that they have had for over thirty years.[61]

A more rational, yet sympathetic viewpoint is recorded by Michael MacDonagh, who noted in his diary for December 1914 the observation that: "On a Saturday recently I saw a match between Chelsea and Arsenal at the Chelsea ground. There was as big an attendance as I had ever seen before the War. This shows how popular the game is as a spectacle and the relaxation it affords the workers after their week's toil".[62] Regardless of their motives, the critics of the professional game were no doubt delighted to see that *The War Illustrated* magazine, the weekly national tabloid of the war, ran a special feature on the soccer players reporting for military training at the White City ground in London.[63]

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[57] Walvin, p.86.
[58] Mason, p.253.
[59] *Sapper*, October 1914, p.54.
[60] Walvin, p.89.
[61] Mason, p.254.
[62] MacDonagh, p.44.

Whilst vigorously campaigning for the curtailment of the game on the Home Front, it is also likely that this self-same group would have staunchly endorsed the army's increasing preoccupation with games as forms of training and recreation for the nation's brave sons under arms. Quite evidently, in time of war the game was to be elevated to the status of 'the greater game', or simply not played at all. Potential officers were reminded that their sporting experiences would prove invaluable to their capacities for leadership once they were thrust into the fray in charge of a company of men, and were encouraged to make this ideological transfer part of their learning experience prior to embarkation for France:

> Anyone who has played football, polo or cricket, or indeed has taken part in any team work, knows well the value of a captain who can face the worst of games with a cheery smile, how it puts heart into all, and inspires them to buck up and do their best, even though things may be looking hopeless. It is just the same in war.[64]

Another military publication reiterated the importance of the relationship between the officers and their men, stressing that physical fitness was a primary factor contributing to success in an attack:

> This war has rightly been called a platoon commander's show, and I want you young officers to regard your men as a shepherd does his flock. He knows all about them. In addition, you must by persistent and continuous :
> (a)Physical training
> (b)Bayonet fighting
> (c)Trench digging
> (d)Rapid firing
> (e)Marching -
> get yourself and your men so fit that the excessive demands which this war, above all others, is making on the endurance of the ranks, does not crock you

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[63] *The War Illustrated*, vol.1, p.630.
[64] Baden-Powell, p.75.

> in the first week. If a man is physically unfit it is like putting a consumptive up against a trained prize-fighter. The consumptive may be brave, but he is absolutely knocked out in the first round.[65]

The Major goes on to remind his officer trainees: "The style of fighting now in vogue is like Port Arthur and the Crimea. Read all you can about these operations, but be ready for the general move forward, and remember that no battle is won on the defensive; we must be ready at any moment for a strong offensive action in which the bayonet and the knife will play a most important part". This misrepresentation of the true nature of the war is not only tragic, but symptomatic of a malaise endemic in many of the population who had no conception of the horrific innovations in war brought about by barbed wire, machine guns, high explosive bombardments, poison gas and the hand grenade. There exists a fantastic dichotomy between their vision of warfare and the actual clinical brutality of the wholesale slaughter on the Western Front which in turn contributes to the importance ajudged the athletic component in military training.

In addition to facilitating success on the battlefield, team games were also widely advocated as therapeutic recreation for the rejuvenation of the men after a hard day's march or a spell under fire in the trenches. Contemporary observers noted with concern that: "After days in the trenches, exercise was more than ever an essential part of the military routine. the march from billets to the trenches was not sufficient to keep the men in a state of muscular fitness".[66] Fortunately, a sporting remedy was always close to hand, as readers of a leading periodical were informed by 'A Subaltern':

> Though cricket is the national game, owing to the great difficulty of finding anywhere to play it under anything like possible conditions, it must yield in popularity to football. The attraction of a football to men seems almost magnetic. A company commander in the infantry told me that however long a march his men had had, and however tired they were at the end of the day, he

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[65] Major W.H.Hamilton, Rapid Training for Young Officers (London: Foster Groom, 1915), pp.27-28.
[66] *The Great War*, vol.6 (1916), p.438.

> would, whenever possible, throw out the company football directly after the "dismiss", and watch how long it would take the men to forget their fatigue and to begin playing. He said that if one could get the men to sleep at night after even ten minutes' football instead of straight from the march, it would make all the difference to their rest.[67]

This account fully endorses the request tendered by some of the Royal Engineers serving in France early in the war - "Incidentally, it may be remarked that the troops on service will much appreciate presents of footballs. Strange as it may appear to the non-footballer, nothing bucks up the average soldier so much after a long march as a game of football!".[68] Graves notes in his autobiography that he and his fellow officers used rugby matches to decide which officer candidates should receive commissions during the war: "Our final selection was made by watching the candidates play games, principally rugby and soccer. Those who played rough but not dirty, and had quick reactions, were the sort needed...".[69]

Although sport behind the lines was clearly sanctioned for the moral and physical benefits that would be derived by the players, one incident revealed the game to be a distinct danger to health and well-being. On the eve of the battle of the Somme, two Glasgow battalions - the Commercials and the Boys Brigade - were playing a friendly match when a chance long-range German shell struck the pitch, killing the latter team's goalkeeper. It was a somewhat ominous portent of things to come.[70]

Though team games had become an increasingly familiar part of army life in both peace and wartime, the traditional military problem with the ill-health and poor physique of its recruits continued to plague those overseeing the flood of volunteers. As the army continued to define health in terms of a man's ability to bear arms against the enemies of the nation, corrective physical training and Swedish gymnastics continued to be the official tools of both regular and new armies alike.[71]

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[67] "Pastimes in the B.E.F.", *Contemporary Review*, vol.1114 (July-December 1918), pp.689-90.

[68] *Sapper*, October 1914, p.54.

[69] Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That (1929; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.203.

[70] Middlebrook, p.80.

[71] J.M.Winter provides an insight into the workings of the National Service Medical Boards

As was the case with team games, manuals and instruction booklets for the remedying of physical defects and the improvement of bodily strength and fitness abounded during the early months of the war. Among the more prominent titles were J.Lewis' Swedish Drill Illustrated: A Short Course for Recruits, Squads and Volunteer Training Corps,[72] Swedish gymnastics expert Allan Brohman's A Short Course of Physical Training for Recruits of the New Armies[73] and Staff-Sergeant Moss's Free Gymnastics (Including Swedish System), and Dumb Bell Exercises[74], which announced proudly that it contained: "full instructions as to the formation of the men, the words of command, an explanation of each movement, with a photograph showing how it is done".[75] Nevertheless, at the height of the national emergency the disciplined imposition of gymnastic drills was deemed to be a slow and ineffective method of raising the individual to his fighting potential. The qualities necessary for the development of a successful British soldier were, according to Baden-Powell, far more oriented around his moral and spiritual strength than his abilities to conform to regimented drills:

> ...confidence [from] knowing that his comrades around him are all equally good men; that they understand their job, and will play the game and stick it out with him to the end. This they can only do by knowing what the game is, having a certain amount of sense of self-sacrifice and helpfulness to each other in getting the work done. The spirit in men is of greater value than can be produced.[76]

He continued: "It is...character which goes to make them efficient for war. Now this character and spirit are about the last thing that drill will put into a man, yet of all things they are the most valuable".

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[71] (cont'd)during the latter years of the war in "Military Fitness and Civilian Health in Britain during the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.15 (1980), 211-44.

[72] (London: Harrison, 1915).

[73] (London: Bale & Danielsson, 1915).

[74] (London: Seymour, 1914).

[75] F.W.T.Lange and W.T.Berry, Books on the Great War (London: Grafton & Co., 1915), p.31.

[76] Baden-Powell, p.23.

Baden-Powell's championing of 'character' as being the cornerstone of military triumph focusses attention directly onto those institutions which had made its formation their very mandate - the public schools. Prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, the public schools had been the subjects of increasingly influential and articulate attacks from liberal reformists who sought to bring the education they offered firmly in line with the demands of the twentieth century by limiting both classics and games and broadening and modernising the curriculum.[77] At the onset of hostilities, such criticisms all but ceased, silenced in no small part by the patriotic and self-sacrificing response of the public school fraternity to the nation's call.[78] As Ian Hay reminded his readers:

> Today the enemy is at our gate, and thousands of public schoolboys are there to meet him. Such as are unable to obtain commissions - and the supply of qualified aspirants greatly exceeds even the present enormous demand - are flocking cheerfully and automatically into the rank and file. Let the detractors of our public school system consider these things, and hang their heads.[79]

So long as those concerned with the future of public school education were bound together in the belief that the war would be short, the demands for a more balanced curriculum subsided. Though it might be their intention to strive to ultimately replace the dominance of athleticism in the system with the Greek ideal of *arete*,[80] they, like the remainder of the nation, could not fail to be anything but impressed with the public schools' contribution to the war effort:

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[77] Edward C.Mack, Public Schools and British Opinion Since 1860 (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1971), chapter eight, 'The New Liberalism', pp.265-302 .

[78] Mack, pp.305-7.

[79] Ian Hay, "The Lighter Side of School Life", *Blackwoods Magazine*, vol.195 (October 1914), p.466.

[80] *The Times Educational Supplement*, 4 August 1914, p.131.

Table II

EX-PUBLIC SCHOOLMEN SERVING WITH THE BRITISH FORCES, NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1914

SCHOOL	WITH COLOURS	KILLED	WOUNDED, MISSING OR PRISONER	MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES
Charterhouse	2000	21	37	28
Cheltenham	1159	59	110	36
Clifton College	1378	19	30	
Dulwich College	730	3	8	
Eton	736	65	100	
Haileybury	1240	18	35	20
Harrow	1351	21	36	52
Malvern	969	11	27	16
Marlborough	1800	15	38	22
Rugby	1150	20	54	
Shrewsbury	561	1	11	4
Uppingham	730	8	13	9
Wellington	1951	38	94	54
Westminster	408	5	5	3

Source: *The Times Educational Supplement*, 3 November 1914, p.180, and 1 December 1914, p.196.

Perusal of such a list prompted the following article during the war, quoted in its entirety to give an appreciation of its Newbolt-like reinforcement of the exchange from sports field to battlefield:

> Here is A, who ranked as a god with me for two years when he was the captain of the football team, my first two years at the school. Shall I ever forget the last five minutes of that big match when we were four points behind how he swept through the defence with his beautiful stride and wonderful swerve and flung himself over the line with a whole pack of the other side on top of him? As I look at his name the whole scene rises before me, the murky November afternoon, the lights already flickering in the pavilion, the sodden turf, the tense hush all over the ground, and the sudden frenzied outbursts of cheering as the ball, kicked with beautiful precision from none too easy an angle, sailed high over the bar. And now he is a captain in another game, and has a D.S.O. to his name. I can picture him leading on his men, without perhaps the same turn of speed - for more years have passed than I care to remember - but still with all the dashing confidence of old.[11]

This romantic and utopian view of the school sports hero entering the world at war with characteristic *panache* and success - almost a modern version of *Vitai Lampada* in prose - was to be exploded in R.G.Sheriff's masterly novel of the post-war era, Journey's End. Nevertheless, the records of the public school contributions were seized upon by the staunch advocates of the *status quo*, who used the figures to endorse and justify the system. In particular, it was an excellent opportunity to stress the age-old adages concerning the benefits of games:

> What virtues can we reasonably suppose to be developed by games? First I should put physical courage...considering as we must the virtues which we are to develop in a nation, we realise that for the security of the nation courage in her young men is indispensable. That it has been bred in the sons of England is attested by the fields of Flanders and the beaches of Gallipoli.[12]

The author, a master at Haileybury College, continued in his article to cite the by-now-familiar formula for military success through games:

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[11] "A School War List. The Men and the Boys They Were", *The Times*, 28 December 1915, p.4.

[12] F.B. Malim, "Athletics", in A.C.Benson, ed., Cambridge Essays On Education (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 148-167.

> And as we desire our games to foster the spirit that faces danger, so we shall wish them to foster the spirit that faces hardship, the spirit of endurance. That is why I think that golf and lawn tennis are not fit school games; they are not painful enough. But cricket, football, hockey, fives can all be painful enough; often victory is only to be won by a clenching of the teeth and the sternest resolve to "stick to it" in the face of exhaustion.[13]

Headmaster Alington of Eton had given qualified support to the belief that games built character three years earlier, although he had stressed that in his view football and rugby were eminently superior to cricket in the fostering of desirable qualities.[14] Like Malim, Alington was particularly critical of the calls for the imposition of gymnastic regimens in the public schools as an alternative to games, and resolutely opposed the introduction of athletic events on the grounds that: "They are blatantly self-seeking; they admit of no leadership and organisation; and whether Waterloo was or was not won on the playing fields of Eton, Armageddon will certainly not be decided on the cinder track".[15] Such traditional viewpoints did not go unchallenged in the latter years of the war, however, as vast numbers of young men continued to lose their lives for worthless muddy yardage on the Western Front. One advocate of reform at Eton saw change within the schools as essential to a military breakthrough:

> No one has more admiration than we have for the splendid *character* training given at this great school. Those young subalterns from Eton, who went forth amongst our first 100,000 to lay down their lives for their country, displayed a courage, a devotion to duty...never surpassed by the youth of any nation in the world, but had those splendid young fellows paid more attention to science and less to Latin verses, we should be knocking at the gates of Potsdam.[16]

Another critic, in an article originally written for *Nash's Magazine* during the war, expressed concern that British youth were being indulged in games under the precept that they were a serious preparation for sterner tasks:

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[13] Malim, pp.152-3.
[14] C.Alington, A Schoolmaster's Apology (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914).
[15] Alington, pp.29-30.
[16] Paraphrased in T.Pellatt, Public School Education and the War (London: Duckworth & Co., 1917), p.57.

> ...it is feared that of latter years boys have been encouraged both at home and at school to think more of 'sport' and games of skill than patriotism, and the special training which would help them also to be heroic and make history! Lawn tennis is now regarded as a serious business, but it is only a game, and a country will never be saved by it. Cricket and football are equally 'games'; neither one nor the other will drive the foe from our shores should he invade us. Games are good as 'games', but when they become a national obsession the hard and fast line must be drawn before it is too late.[87]

The most influential castigation of the military assumptions of athleticism, however, came not from the press or the periodicals, but from within the schools themselves. Alec Waugh's The Loom of Youth, a fictional account of his own experiences at Sherbourne school in the years immediately prior to 1917, had, according to Mack, "an influence comparable at least to that of Tom Brown's Schooldays" upon British educational debate during the war.[88] His criticisms of the tyranny and limitations of athleticism stemmed from his own disillusionment with a system which placed too great a store in prowess in games, particularly when he felt that such a preparation did little to prepare the young man for a life of fulfilment outside the bounds of school. Especially pertinent was his condemnation of the widely accepted overlap between games field and battle on the fields of the First World War. His central protagonist in the novel, Gordon Carruthers, voices his discontent with a refreshing directness: "GAMES don't win battles, but BRAINS do, and brains aren't trained on the footer field".[89] Waugh's comments, although arousing a great deal of controversy, were by no means universally accepted. Many supporters of athleticism were quick to refute his claims with evidence brought directly from the conflict around them, as Malim's article illustrates:

> "We are not very well satisfied" said a War Office official "with the stamp of young officer we are getting. Many of them never seem to have played a game in their lives, though they are first-rate mathematicians". And there is no doubt that whether for war or peace mathematics is not a substitute for leadership.[90]

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[87] Marie Corelli, My 'Little Bit' (London: W.Collins & Sons, 1919), p.113.
[88] Mack, p.317.
[89] Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth (London: n.p., 1917), p.306.
[90] Malim, p.157.

Clearly the lines of division between the reformists and the traditionalists were not to be closed without a struggle and it is perhaps wise to move on from such theorising in order to put the role of sport into a more practical perspective. Sport, games and physical training, it has been shown, permeated the language and the lifestyle of the war extensively, and became inextricably bound up with the very act of volunteering to fight for one's country. At home they were viewed as essential preparation for both leadership and character training and the honing and sharpening of the soldier's physique. At the front they were the ideal pastime for those troops in the reserve line, representing not only a cheap, convenient and popular recreation, but also an ideal medium through which the young volunteer officers, many of whom were fresh from the public schools and universities, could successfully relate and integrate with their men. Keegan encapsulates this remarkable transference of public school traditions to the trenches thus:

> Simply by being themselves...the first amateur officers provided their untrained soldiers both with an environment and a type of leadership almost identical to those found in a regular, peacetime regiment. They organised games for the men, and took part themselves, because that was the public school recipe for usefully occupying young males in their spare time. They organized competitions between platoons and companies in cross-country running, rifle shooting and trench digging - because competition was the dynamic of public school life.[91]

Though many would perhaps realise that war was not really a game to be played, these young men never lost sight of the fact that games could be usefully employed in war.

Regardless of the claims and legitimating theories being advanced to justify their existence, sports, games and physical training were clearly central parts of the British soldier's experience during the First World War. Whatever his rank, his education, or his social background, he had been exposed to sport in a variety of guises prior to the war, and these experiences were reiterated and reinforced in both language and practice following his enlistment. The advancement of athleticism and the rationalising of games were, however, only the most visible examples of sport's intrusion into the domain of warfare. Sports and games also transcended the individual level and were used in not only identification of national and racial stereotypes, but for anticipating, legitimating and sanctifying British victories in the conflict.

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[91] Keegan, p.279.

Chapter VI

GALLANT BRITONS AND BARBARIC HUNS : SPORT AND BRITISH PROPAGANDA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

A lexical definition of propaganda reveals it to be "any systematic, widespread dissemination or promotion of ideas, doctrines [or] practices to further one's own cause or to damage an opposing one".[1] In his examination of British involvement in international propaganda following the First World War, Black expands this definition, illustrating that it is the medium of popular communication that hosts this "conscious, organised attempt to influence [the individual's] attitudes, beliefs or actions".[2] It has been traditionally defined as "organised persuasion by non-violent means"[3] and "a method utilized for influencing the conduct of others on behalf of pre-determined ends".[4] The latter two authors agree that it is very closely related to our everyday experience and that the pressures of warfare alter only the intensity of its application: "Propaganda is a method, a device for conditioning behaviour. It represents nothing new in human affairs, except a refinement of techniques and the appropriation of new instruments for exerting the stimuli".[5] Linebarger goes as far as to reinforce this with the following analogy: "Education is to psychological warfare [propaganda] what a glacier is to an avalanche. The mind is in both cases captured, but the speed and techniques differ".[6]

Just as all of these definitive efforts stress the functional aspects of propaganda, recent research into the propaganda of the First World War appears to have concentrated on its role as an agent of a nation's war effort, rather than the content of its material. The release of previously confidential cabinet papers over the past twenty years has enabled historians to provide thorough and illuminating accounts of the symbiotic relationship between Fleet Street and the War Cabinet, who harnessed their joint efforts in a variety of propaganda departments and organisations to provide a persuasive alternative to the German literary output.[7] Few, it would seem, have chosen to examine the content of such publications analytically, although Alice Marquis' comparative study of the belligerent presses of both England and Germany is particularly enlightening.[8] Hopkin, too, adopts a somewhat different approach in that he takes for his central topic the British mass media's response to domestic censorship during the war years.[9] None of the articles consulted made any reference to the role of sports and games in the propaganda process, although an indication of their prominence in the national press has already been given. Only Hopkin and Marquis actually concede that the British reading public were to any great extent victims of news management or propagandist manipulation and they, once again, concentrate largely on the mechanics of this process rather than the content. Clearly, this is an important area which demands attention. Having previously illustrated the interrelationship between sport, war and British society prior to the outbreak of war, it is clearly a necessity to analyse and understand its various roles during the years of the conflict itself. Accordingly, this chapter will review, categorise and account for the use of sport in the propaganda process during 1914-1918. It will reveal how the jingoistic use of sport and team games to characterise the British soldier's efforts during the war was not merely a logical extension of the military tenets of athleticism *per se*, but rather the product of a complicated interaction of beliefs and ideologies which embraced notions of current military strategy and popular theories surrounding social Darwinism. Undoubtedly designed to bolster the spirit of the nation as casualty lists lengthened and progress on the battlefield appeared to at times regress, the employment of pictures, photographs, captions, prose and poetry concerning sporting prowess in war extended the familiar and popular image of the British sportsman-soldier to its logical conclusion. Reduced to its simplest form, the British press advanced the notion that sport and team games provided the biological, physical and moral qualities necessary to defeat Germans. The German race, lacking in sporting ability and heritage, and therefore possessing no sportsmanlike conduct, would lose the war to an eminently superior British foe - *homo athleticus*. This conclusion obviously requires amplication and justification. Before examining the form and content of the material, however, a review of the conceptual background will be undertaken.

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[1] Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd.edition, ed. David B.Gusalnik (William Collins & World Publishing Co.Inc., 1976), p.1139.
[2] John B.Black, Organising the Propaganda Instrument: The British Experience (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p.ix
[3] Paul Linebarger, Psychological Warfare (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p.25.
[4] H.Lavine and J.Wechsler, War Propaganda and the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p.vii.
[5] Lavine and Wechsler, p.vii.
[6] Linebarger, p.32.

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[7] See, for instance, M.L.Sanders, "Wellington House and British Propaganda During the First World War", *The Historical Journal*, vol.18, no.1 (1975), 119-146; Philip M.Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda During the First World War", *The Historical Journal*, vol.23, no.4 (1980), 875-898; John M. McEwan, "The National Press During the First World War: Ownership and Circulation", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.17, (1982), 459-486.
[8] Alice Goldfarb Marquis, "Words as Weapons: Propaganda in Britain and Germany During the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.13 (1978), 467-498.
[9] Deian Hopkin, "Domestic Censorship in the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.5 (1970), 151-169.

Previous chapters have shown that games and physical training had been highly valued as elements of military preparation since at least the Crimean War. Although evidence can be provided to show that they figured within the armed forces somewhat earlier, it was the years following 1856 that witnessed their recognition and organisation as an integral part of training the soldier in both mind and body. Though originally there was considerable variance in the purpose afforded such athletic endeavour by officers and men, such diversity had been streamlined by the outbreak of the First World War. As has been noted, this was in no small part due to the increased participation of the working classes in the game of soccer, which provided a common bond to all ranks in the forces. However, this increased emphasis on games can also be seen as a reflection of developments in British military thought between 1902 and 1914. As Travers has pointed out, in this period strategic philosophy can actually be seen to have regressed in the minds of many of the nation's foremost military experts.[10]

Twentieth century British military thought was influenced immediately by the lessons learned during the Boer War, after which it was concluded that consolidated fire power, smokeless powder and improvement in the range and accuracy of firearms had made a frontal assault using the bayonet hazardous and open to high casualties. The War Office therefore stressed the crucial importance of alternative tactics - flank assaults, envelopment of the enemy forces and superior, massed fire power. At the same time it also emphasised the need for "individuality, initiative, morale, character, and the necessity for developing a resolutely offensive spirit".[11] This advocation of a sensible balance between technology and morale lasted only until the results of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 were made known. British observers noted that in their Manchurian campaign, the Japanese forces had won their battles by crossing the fire zone regardless of heavy losses inflicted by the entrenched defenders and employing high morale and a spirit of *esprit d'corps* to overwhelm the Russian troops in hand-to-hand combat. The response of the British tacticians was to abandon the former notes of caution in the assault and lay increased stress on the moral, physical and pyschological preparation of their troops. This policy was confirmed in the army manual, Infantry Training (1914): "The main essential to success in battle is to close with the enemy, cost what it may".[12] Though several officers attempted to counter this policy with tactics based upon the machinery of modern warfare, not moral fortitude, Travers concludes that the generally accepted view was that in order to overcome better weaponry, one simply needed to 'build' a better man.[13] These higher moral qualities amongst the troops, such as manliness, discipline, courage, loyalty and self-sacrifice, were all constituent parts of a man's character and, as has already been shown, formation of such admirable characteristics in the Victorian and Edwardian soldier was being increasingly attributed to his participation and performance on the games field. The image of the sportsman-soldier during the First World War was therefore to owe its acceptence as much to military blueprints for success in battle as to athleticism, for it was believed that the very practice of games and sports would foster in him those attributes which would carry him through a murderous frontal assault on the enemy.

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[10] T.H.E.Travers, "The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought 1870 - 1915", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.13 (1978), 531-553.

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[11] Travers, p.537.
[12] Travers, p.538.
[13] T.H.E.Travers, "Technology, Tactics and Morale.", *Journal of Modern History*, vol.51 (June 1979), p.276.

The literature of the war years thus reveals a remarkable unity of purpose in its treatment of sports and games, depicting them as both morally and militarily desirable. Interwoven within this legitimating fabric was one other crucial ideological strand - an underlying assumption of the British soldier-sportsman's racial superiority over his German foe, which can be readily translated in terms of Spencerian social Darwinism: the application of Darwin's theory of the evolution of the species to the social framework of mankind.[14] It was this element which was to spur the most caustic racial propaganda involving sport and physical capabilities from the British press during the years of the war. Originating in Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural selection, social Darwinism was thrust into the forefront of Victorian thought by Herbert Spencer's alternative explanatory formulation - 'the survival of the fittest'.[15] Spencer's phraseology, with its implication being that the 'fittest' were also the 'best', compounded the issue greatly, allowing what had been conceived by Darwin in biological terms to be advanced by various neo-Darwinists as an explanation for inequality in a social hierarchy. Thus the 'survival of the fittest' became the rose-coloured spectacles through which various Victorian intellectuals viewed their social environment, allowing them to conceive of man's existence in terms of a perpetual struggle, out of which would emerge only the strongest of the species. Since in this manner the weaker of the race would not survive, a resulting improvement in the quality of racial stock in forthcoming generations was assured.

Alongside the debate on the social applications of Darwinist theory ran the 'evolutionary anthropology' of Dr. James Hunt and the Anthropological Society, founded in London just prior to 1860.[16] Having surveyed various peoples and societies around the world, Hunt and his supporters concluded that "wealth, and the technological and military superiority which went with it, seemed to confer moral precedence also".[17] Accordingly, they advanced a theoretical hierarchy of the peoples and social institutions of the world, ranging from primordial man to the 'backward' cultures of Africa and the Pacific rim, ascending through the races of the Far East until they reached the pinnacle of cultural and racial supremacy - the civilised nations of nineteenth century Europe. Those who chose to support these blatantly racist policies were therefore convinced of an inherent inferiority in the 'lower' races, and many chose to use such an argument to justify permanent colonial rule in these nations.[18] Elements of the underlying bias of this style of theorising can quickly be detected in the following passage, which characterises the Englishman as a racially superior officer, leader and athlete, and assigns his military supremacy to the hardening effect of school games:

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[14] Halliday offers the following literal definition of social Darwinism, being "...that enterprise or ideology, founded in the nineteenth century, which holds social evolution to depend upon the operation of the law of natural selection of favourable heritable variants", although he also makes the point that "it seems unlikely that the term Social Darwinism denotes a determinate set of theories, or marks out a subject matter amenable to strict definition". R.J.Halliday, "Social Darwinism: A Definition", *Victorian Studies*, vol.14 (June 1971), 389-405.

[15] Robert Bannister, Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), p.15.

[16] Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), pp.1-29.

> The Nordic is naturally a leader and an officer....At his first coming he was a natural superior in many ways; tall and strong, he was an athlete, trained by his nomadic existence to ride, kill, harry and conquer. His patriarchal mode of life had fostered male domination, while the nature of his existence had necessitated recognized leadership and succession....Keenly aware of their [English] heritage, they have not only partaken fully in public activities, but have kept their minds and bodies fit by constant exercise, and fostered their military qualities by sport. In the last respect the mantle of the Romans has fallen upon them; the proverbial connection between Eton and Waterloo is comparable to the relation between Roman games and the Roman army. The discipline of the cold bath, of floggings and hardships at school, of dangerous games...has a psychological background of a mission of military leadership.[19]

Precisely this rationale can be detected in the press releases for both teams in the New Zealand rugby tour of Wales in 1905. The All Blacks were vaunted by *The Daily Mail* as a superior breed of men to the city bred Britons whom they had beaten prior to the Welsh game, a claim which was endorsed by the New Zealand High Commissioner who spoke of his nation as being

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[17] Godfrey Lienhardt, Social Anthropology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.7.
[18] Lienhardt, p.8; Bolt, p.27. As Bannister points out in his chapter "Imperialism and the Warrior Critique", this urge for conquest was a rather unsavoury blend of "cultural Anglo-Saxonism and biological rascism" as well as being a mutation of Darwinian theory. Bannister, p.227.
[19] R.N. Bradley, Racial Origins of English Character (London : Geo.Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926), pp.44-45.

"...peopled with a race inheriting the sporting instincts of British stock, with vaster opportunities...the inhabitants do not live packed together, house touching house".[20] When the Welsh XV astounded the rugby world by defeating the All Blacks (3-0), victory was once again seen in terms of biological superiority, as *The South Wales Daily News* makes clear:

> The men that represented Wales embodied the best manhood of the race...the great quality of defence and attack in the Welsh race is to be traced to the training of the early period when powerful enemies drove them to their mountain fortresses. There was developed then those traits of character that find fruition today. 'Gallant little Wales' has produced sons of strong determination, invincible stamina, resolute, mentally keen, physically sound".[21]

This, then, was the socio-biological background to what was to become the intellectual battlefield of the war. British scientists, philosophers and men of learning expressed outrage at the writings of Nietzsche, Treitschke, Moltke and Bernhardi, all of whom advanced the concept of the 'biological necessity of war' to support an aggressive German military *Weltpolitik*. Under the precepts of their argument, warfare was depicted as the highest form of conflict in the struggle for survival - a rationalised method of allowing the stronger of the species to attain its rightful position of superiority over the weaker. Even in the highest civilisation they held that war would always be an essential method of preserving the human virtues and ensuring that the weak would perish.[22] British opponents of these views were able to offer an opinion as to the nature of German character based upon such theorising. Havelock Ellis noted that the German nation's attitude to war differed distinctly to that of Great Britain:

> It involved the recognition of the fact that war is not a game to be played for its own sake, by a professional caste, in accordance with fixed rules which it

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[20] David Smith, "People's Theatre - A Century of Welsh Rugby", *History Today*, vol.31 (March 1981), p.32.

[21] Smith, p.32.

[22] See Havelock Ellis, Essays in War Time (Boston: Haughton Mifflin, 1917), chapter two - "Evolution and the War".

> would be dishonourable to break, but a method, carried out by the whole organised manhood of the nation, effectively attaining an end desired by the state".[23]

These debates were more than sufficient for the British press examined in this study to characterise the German race as war-mongering barbarians upon the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914. In the eyes of the national press the Germans became stereotyped as a race whose very concept of *Kultur* denied the essential elements of humanitarianism and integrity necessary in a civilised people. Bishop Mercer set the intellectual conflict firmly in biological terms in his concluding passage to an article on "Nietzsche and Darwinism":

> Sympathy, co-operation, fellowship and love are not sad aliens in our mysterious realm of life, nor are they the springs of a slave morality which must be spurned and crushed because they keep the great ones from their rightful heritage. No, they are the essential factors in a living whole, big with happy destiny....For Darwin's world there is the power of an expanding hope. For Nietzsche's world there is naught but ruin and ravin. Nature with her ten thousand tongues repudiates the abortion.[24]

The British press strove to depict, reinforce and exploit this recently detected racial differentiation between the British and German nations, using in particular references to sports, games and athletic prowess to segregate the opposing armies for the benefit of their readers. In doing so, they conveniently adopted their own national mutation of social Darwinian theory and used it to anticipate British victory in the war. This adaptation of Spencer's 'survival of the fittest' to mean exactly that in the sporting sense is symbolised in the following account of the disastrous Somme campaign:

> ...when it came to a sheer test of manhood on fairly equal terms the German veteran was not a match for the British recruit. The Briton's advantage resided

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[23] Ellis, p.47.

[24] J.Edward Mercer, "Nietzsche and Darwinism", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol.77 (February 1915), p.431.

> largely in his athletic habit of body and his sportsmanlike spirit....In this connection it must be borne in mind that pure pluck and gameness were the only available qualities of race that could have carried the new levies through their frightful ordeal. The punishment they received, to use the word in a sporting sense that offends the Germans, was indescribable. But the men who survived went steadily on".[25]

This naive argument was reiterated by Capt.A.J.Dawsen who recorded: -

> This business of fighting - fighting continuously and cheerily in the presence of devastating casualties - has a good deal in common with swimming and bicycling and things of that sort in which instinct plays a big part; horse-riding, too; anything that demands perfectly smooth co-ordination of thoughts, nerves, muscles and - well, and spirit.[26]

Lord Northcliffe echoed these sentiments in his widely-read patriotic publication, Lord Northcliffe's War Book: "Our soldiers are individual. They embark on little individual enterprises. The German...is not so clever at these devices. He was never taught them before the war, and his whole training from childhood upwards has been to obey, and obey in numbers". The reason for German inferiority was simple: "He has not played individual games. Football, which develops individuality has only been introduced into Germany in comparatively recent times".[27] This was a somewhat *blase* generalisation. Though the German Football Association had not been incorporated until 1900, the game had been received enthusiastically in Germany since the 1880s.[28] Racial stereotyping of the opposing forces through sport continued throughout the war. Much was made of the Northcliffe argument, and it was common for accusations against German brutality and inhumanity to be traced back to their preoccupation with duelling as opposed to team games. F.H.Swift, in a thorough examination of the cultural values surrounding the *Mensur*, or student fencing bout, concluded that it was:

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[25] *The Great War*, vol.8 (1917), p.48.
[26] A.J.Dawsen, Somme Battle Stories (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1916), p.38.
[27] Quoted in Fussell, p.267.
[28] J.G.Dixon et al, Landmarks, p.128.

> ...not only one of the most brutalising activities devised by a nation, but it shuts out of student life wholesome sports....In the eyes of the corporation student...the exertions incident to the ordinary English and American sports are not in keeping with the dignity of a gentleman. To drink, to fence, to insult those he has wilfully chosen to regard as enemies, and to avenge insults, this is the life of a gentleman.[29]

In contrast to the traditional English pastimes, the *Mensur* is clearly depicted as an agent in the production of the brutal and uncultured manhood of militaristic Germany:

> Courage, self-control, refusal to surrender though knowing that defeat is inevitable - these are the roots of manhood; and the test, the school for these is pain. The *Mensur* is a *Fest* of physical brutality, of voluntarily inflicted and voluntarily endured physical torture. The avowed aim, as stated above, is moral courage. The type of courage actually developed is debased, immoral, and anti-social.[30]

Whilst Swift attempts to rationalise with reason, other critics took these quasi-biological theories to quite preposterous lengths. One in particular advanced the notion that the German racial somatotype adversely affected his golf swing.[31] Another journalist wrote of the German soldier being "massive in limb and body, but he suffered from a national defect. His neck was short, and this in a fighting man is fatal".[32] Quite the most outrageous and blatantly racist views of Germany are offered up for public consumption by *The War Illustrated*, however. One notable double page spread contrasts a picture of a dejected-looking German soldier with that of his cheerful British counterpart, adding the caption "Health, bouyant spirits, good temper and gay gallantry - all that make up 'moral' - is stamped upon this English Tommy's face, with its laughing eyes and row of splendid teeth".[33]

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[29] F.H.Swift, "The Making of a Gentleman in Germany", *The Contemporary Review*, vol.110 (1916), 465-473.

[30] Swift, p.469; see also R.S.Nolan, "Social Training and Patriotism in Germany and England", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol.79 (February 1916), 435-447.

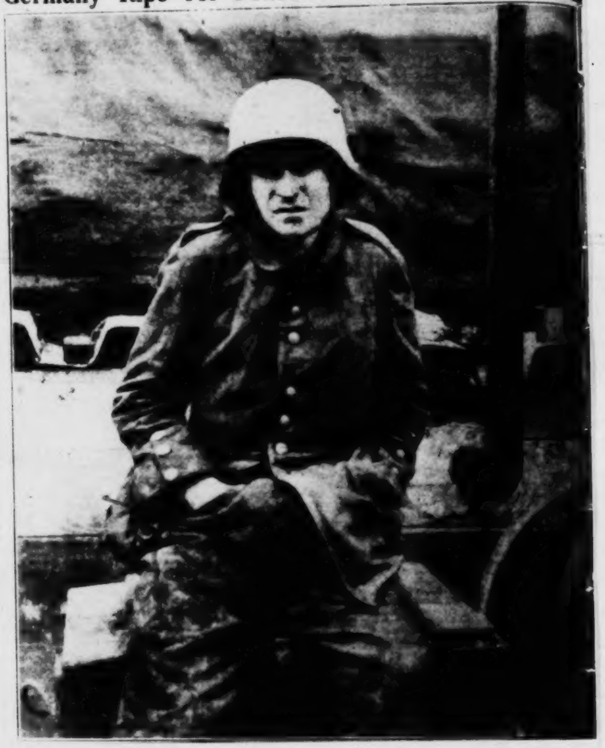
[31] Cecil Graeme, "The German Insanity", *English Review*, vol.29 (1919), p.241.

[32] George Goodchild, "Wilkins", *Everyman*, 5 November 1915, p.46.

[33] *The War Illustrated*, 27 January 1917, pp.564-5.

Plate IV

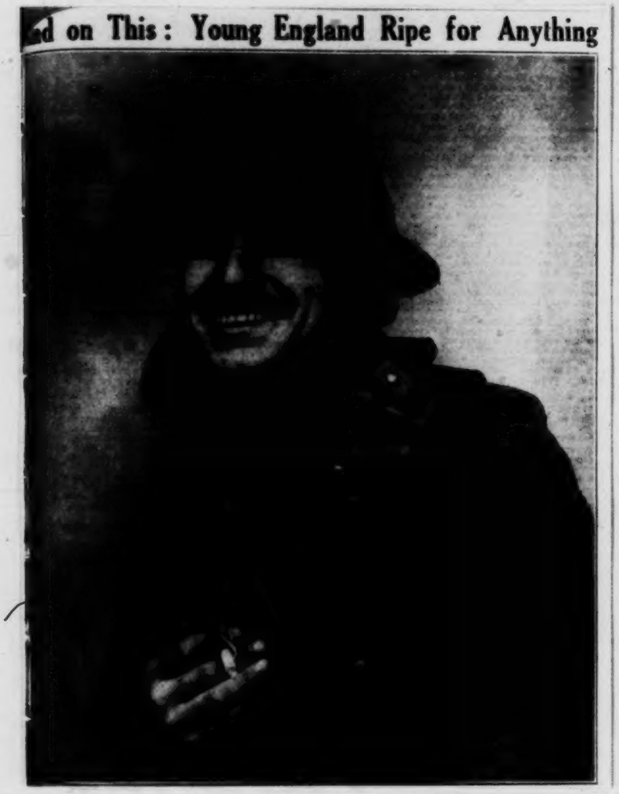
Germany Ripe for Peace: Look on This Pict



The physically inferior German soldier, as depicted by

The War Illustrated Magazine.

Plate V



d on This: Young England Ripe for Anything

The British 'Tommy' - physically superior in every sense

to his German foe.

The propagandist purpose of this 'double feature', together with its blatant disregard for the truth is confirmed in an article by Captain Brown of the Royal Army Medical Corp, who wrote following the war that the universal opinion amongst his fellow doctors was that the standard of physique amongst the British recruits was deplorably low - lower, even, than that amongst German prisoners of war - and that "the number of physical defects and disabilities is legion". With regard to Tommy Atkins' teeth, "There is only one word that expresses the state of the nation's teeth, and that is deplorable".[34] One year later, another full page feature in the magazine displayed fourteen photographs of various German prisoners captured on the Western Front, and from them advanced the following analysis of their characters:

> In the fourteen faces reproduced on this page, picked at random from groups, one detects truculence, cunning, meanness, and animal hostility; several are marked by features associated with criminality; some approximate to the idiot type.[35]

Another passage of a similar vein announced of the German soldier: "His face is fully expressive of all the savagery and 'frightfulness' associated with the exponents of 'higher civilisation', so called...compare his physiognomy with the frank, open countenance of the Briton".[36]

It is evident from this brief survey that convenient social Darwinist adaptations to support the national purpose were not exclusively the preserve of the German race, but were a prominent part of the British written response to the outbreak and progress of the war. Sport played an important part in this theorising, for it allowed an athletic distinction to be drawn between two nations who shared the same racial and linguistic heritage, and who had both been placed at the summit of the civilised world by the evolutionary anthropologists. Sports and games were therefore convenient agents of cultural diffusion, through which the Englishman could be shown to have acquired his national character, and without which the German nation had lapsed into military barbarism. In the terrible conflict of nations that engulfed Europe, it was widely advocated that the Briton could always search for moral strength in his hereditary athletic credo:

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[34] E.Brown, "The Physique of the Nation", *The English Review*, vol.28 (1919), pp.242-250.
[35] *The War Illustrated*, 24 February 1918, p.337.
[36] *The War Illustrated*, vol.2 (1915), p.1.

> Play games hard, and keep the rules of them, even when your blood is hot and you are tempted to disregard them. In three words : PLAY THE GAME - a little phrase which may be taken as the characteristic understatement of the modern Englishman's creed of honour, in all classes.[37]

A content analysis of *The War Illustrated* for the period of the war reveals several other means by which sport was used to advance propagandist theories of British military superiority. It is notable, for instance, that Germany does not figure in any of the 93 major positive references or photographs pertaining to sport during the war, but that the allied forces are regularly represented in an athletic context that is often attractively tailored to conform to the popular image of their various national characters. Of interest, too, is the practice of photographing recuperating or wounded soldiers in a sporting situation, as if to show that even their physical wounds can be salved by sport, and that regardless of injury, their national sporting spirit remains unquenched. These photographs are invariably reinforced with jingoistic and laudatory captions which make the propagandist purpose of the material clear.

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[37] John Galsworthy, "Diagnosis of an Englishman", *Fortnightly Review*, vol.47 (1915), p.841 .

Table III

REFERENCES TO SPORTS, GAMES AND PHYSICAL TRAINING IN *THE WAR ILLUSTRATED* MAGAZINE, 1914 - 1918

Year	Football	Swedish Drill	Injured Men	Allied Sport	British Sport	Totals
1914	4			1	1	6
1915	4	1	3	6	15	29
1916	1	6	1	2	6	16
1917	8	1	2	1	15	27
1918				1	14	15
TOTALS	17	8	6	11	51	93

This table reflects the number of photographs and/or written references to sport within the magazine for the war years. Written references to sporting achievement in the frequent obituaries were not included for the purposes of this study, being seen as biographical rather than propagandist material. Captions to photographs were not counted in the analysis.

As can be seen, the table of references lends little support to those who would theorise that the discovery of the horrific nature of the war had an immediate and adverse effect upon its interrelationship with sport. Through the eyes of *The War Illustrated* at least, the war remained firmly intertwined with the practice of sports and games to the bitter end.[31] This situation was reinforced in the obituary columns of the national press, through which the sporting achievements of the fallen were publicised as a form of requiem. In both *The War Illustrated* and *The Great War* such invocations to athletic excellence were accompanied by a photograph of the young man in his sports apparel.[39] *The Great War* dedicated almost an entire page of its 'Roll of Honour' section in 1917 to "Sportsmen who fell" in the conflict. Those named were almost entirely public school or university men, although the column does concede: "To mention all the sportsmen killed during the year would be to write down the names of nearly all the 190,000 [British deaths in 1917]".[40]

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[31] Circulation figures for *The War Illustrated* remain elusive. Its impact on the consciousness of British wartime society was likely to be notable, however, as a leading researcher in the political press of the era points out: "*War Illustrated* must have been one of the countless tabloid productions to appear during the war, some of which...were incredibly successful from the very first issue. Certainly illustrated papers of all kinds were in great demand as there was a huge market of readers for papers that appealed to the emotions rather than the mind". Letter received from Professor J.M.MacEwen, Brock University, Ontario, Canada, 28 May 1984.

The place of sports and team games in athletic, military and evolutionary theories of superiority has been examined above, with particular attention being paid to how this integrated with British views of both the English and the German soldier. To add another dimension to this illustration, it should be noted that the allied forces were also portrayed to varying degrees as national sporting stereotypes, which both increased the image of military unity and reiterated the concept of their physical supremacy over the German forces, who were characterised directly and by implication as inherently inferior. Though both powers might claim God and a just cause to be favouring them, sport was thereby designated as a crucial and potentially deciding factor in the conflict. Team games, reputedly the source of so much British Imperial vigour and success, were shown to be no longer the exclusive preserve of the elegant Englishman, but a popular and equally beneficial training ground for the troops of both Belgium and France.[41] In perhaps what is the most unprecedented visual statement of allied unity, a photograph shows a British officer congratulating the captain of a French soldiers' soccer team after they had *beaten* a team of British cavalrymen.[42] This remarkable gesture of magnanimity found reciprocation in the adulatory tones of the French publication, *L'Auto*, which praised the English soldiers in the following terms:

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[39] See, for instance, the obituaries commemorating Lieut. K.L.Hutchings, the "famous cricketer", in *The Great War*, vol.8 (1917), p.551, and that of Lieut. The Hon. Keith Anthony Stewart in *The War Illustrated*, vol.2 (1915), p.375.

[40] *The Great War*, vol.8 (1917), p.560.

[41] *The War Illustrated*, vol.1 (1914), p.79; vol.2 (1915), p.158.

[42] *The War Illustrated*, 20 May 1916, p.315.

> There are men! There are the models for us to copy. All of them, you must know, are beautifully built, remarkably well-proportioned, and with obvious powers of endurance. They all enjoy perfect health...that health, or rather that physical condition, which assures one that at the psychological and terrible moment of the battle, when the victory is gained by those who can last a quarter of an hour longer than their opponents, one will prove victorious and will hold out longer than the foe.[43]

The French correspondent continued "One fine day they [the British soldiers] made the discovery that daily exercise...had become indispensable to them, and now today they bring to their country and to the cause of civilisation the admirable rampart of their powerful torsos and of their indefatigable and supple muscles". This practice of nationality stereotyping through sport was extended to the other allied nations too. Both the Canadian and Anzac soldiers were invariably depicted as rugged sons of the Empire, hardened to war by a life on the very outposts of the Crown's colonies and Dominions. Strong, determined men who would brook no nonsense from the Germans, the latter brigades are aptly represented by one "Giant Anzac", whose deeds were celebrated in the following lines:

> A remarkably daring feat was achieved by an Anzac, Captain Foss, during a midnight raid on the German trenches. Coming across one of the enemy about to seek refuge in his dug-out, Captain Foss, who is a powerful athlete, 6'4'' in height, caught him by the hips and hurled him bodily over the parapet towards the British lines, shouting "There's number one!".[44]

The image of the Anzacs cultivated by the press is perfectly captured in the following poem, "The Australian" :

> Bronzed and clean-shaven, lithe of limb,
> With clear grey eyes that turn on you
> A steady gaze which pierces through

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[43] "Physique of the British Soldier - A Flattering Comparison", *Times*, 3 November 1914, p.5.

[44] *The War Illustrated*, 8 July 1916, p.492. A similar incident involving a British officer was also reported, the officer calling the whole affair "a splendid scrum". *The War Illustrated*, 5 August 1916, p.577.

Flesh and blood.....
Character, strength, a poise erect
And virile, these shine out through all.[45]

Canadian soldiers were deemed to have other soldierly skills which stemmed from their lives as hunters and trappers in a land that was evidently still beyond the realm of British comprehension.[46] Several issues of *The War Illustrated* show a Canadian sniper at work. One in particular accounts for the soldier's proficiency with the rifle by the fact that he has "brought his knowledge of game hunting in the Far West to the greater work of beating the enemy on the plains of Flanders".[47] By far the most romanticised nation in sporting terms, however, were the Italians. Far away from the mud-locked subterranean passages that played host to the trench warfare of the Western Front, the Italian Alpini were characterised by the British press as adventurous mountaineers, boyishly foiling the attempts of the Austrian forces to drive them from their traditional eyries in the Dolomites. Lithe, fit and innovative in their tactics, artists' impressions abound of the troops on skis, or roped together as they climb a sheer precipice to attack the unsuspecting Austrian outposts. Ignoring the fact that most of the fighting took place in the valleys, passes and plains of the country, one picture shows the readers an "Amazing incident on the Alpine front. Alpini succeed in lassoing an Austrian *mitrailleuse* gunner, bringing him down the mountainside with his weapon, a triumph of skill and strength, and by no means an unusual occurrence in the Alps".[48]

These are some of the more noteworthy examples of the British press' use of sport to provide an aura of athletic unity to the allied forces. They are by no means the only ones. Readers could also see Indian troops wrestling, Australian and Indian teams performing a tug-of-war on camel-back, troops on board ship keeping fit for battle with Swedish gymnastics and, when America entered the war, an International baseball match at Lord's between

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[45] Eliot Crawshay-Williams, The Gutter and the Stars (London : Erskine MacDonald, 1918), p.23.
[46] See Dunae, p.146 for A.G.Racey's cartoon portrayal of "The Englishman in Canada".
[47] *The War Illustrated*, 22 July 1916.
[48] *The War Illustrated*, 1 April 1916, p.154.

Canadian and United States servicemen.[49] Inter-allied tugs-of-war, too, were popular. One picture appeared with the following caption: "Peaceful tug-of-war between Arabs and men of the King's African Rifles in Jubaland, East Africa. The darkies evidently took part in the contest with great zest".[50] Once again, it should not be overlooked that at no time are the German or Austro-Hungarian forces assigned any form of press coverage that equates positively with sports and games. To show them to have the ability and capacity to play, and play at games which were considered unequivocally English, would be to undermine the entire image of German inhumanity and physical and moral inferiority which was clearly such a major part of British wartime propaganda.

As well as serving the cause of allied unity, images of sports and games were also used to display the British soldier's hearty resolution in the face of adversity. Two *leitmotifs* can be detected in the national press - sport for the wounded, and games and physical activity amongst British prisoners-of-war in Germany. Athletic representation of the former group, no doubt intended to be a reassurance to the increasing number of British families being blighted by the news of an injured relative or friend, appears now as uncomfortably disconcerting and in some cases undeniably macabre. Wounded soldiers photographed partaking in a suspended apple-eating competition, or a race in which a balloon is pushed along the ground with the player's head now seem quite unflattering.[51] Similarly, a photograph of two war amputees playing billiards with their mechanical arms does little to further the image of the sporting British hero, bloody but unbowed.[52] On the other hand, several items continue to radiate an air of pride and resilience in the knowledge that, despite the physical wound, the quintessential sporting spirit of the Briton has survived the worst that his enemies could throw at him. Unshaken and undeterred he continues to play his traditional games, recuperating and rejuvenating to prepare for another assault on the German foe. Examples of this type are pictures of the injured playing football,[53] and the "Grand International Final" which featured soccer and baseball matches between French, Canadian and British soldiers.[54] A later item shows a wounded New Zealander playing tennis, which is described as "A Spartan cure for shrapnel injuries".[55] It is notable that all of these examples utilised the medium of film to convey their impact to the reader. As Sanders notes, "The effect that actual war scenes could add to the printed word was unlimited. It was a prevailing assumption of the time that the camera could not lie...".[56] To put this particular element of propaganda into context, a non-visual source has been selected that carries a more personal viewpoint. In a reflective letter to his son at the Front, Robert Saunders, the headmaster of a local school in Fletching, wrote:

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[49] *The War Illustrated*, 25 August 1917, p.35. Princess Louise was present at the game, and was introduced to both teams.
[50] *The War Illustrated*, vol.6 (1917), p.232.
[51] *The War Illustrated*, 5 October 1918, p.22.
[52] *The Great War*, vol.13 (1919), p.219.

> Last Thursday, a gentleman at Piltdown invited 'Arms and Legs', i.e. soldiers who had lost an arm or a leg to play in a cricket match in the Recreation Ground....I stood and watched for a time but it was too worrying for me to see a man on one leg trying to bat, though Jim Fuller our captain told the bowlers to bowl easy balls. Some of the women cried to see them but they were as cheerful as crickets and hopped on one leg from the Pavilion without crutches.[57]

British prisoners-of-war, too, were recorded as cheerfully participating in sport during their internment in Germany. Officers imprisoned at Heidelberg were shown playing tennis within the barbed wire enclosure, a game which was, the journalist informed the reader, "A poor substitute for the set their brother soldiers were playing in France to strike the Kaiser's crown into the hazard, but a welcome relief from the monotony of enforced idleness".[58] Another formal team photograph shows captured officers seated on a tennis court in the camp at Crefeld, Prussia, where they sought to "keep themselves fit by active service in the tennis courts".[59] Possibly due to the difficulty in getting information from the camps, this is without doubt one of the areas where the British press missed an unprecedented opportunity to extol the virtues of sport in the Briton at war, for as Ketchum makes clear, sports and games assumed an importance that was unsurpassed in prison camp life.[60] Ketchum, one of 4000 young men interned at the old Ruhleben race course at the onset of hostilities, spent the four war years in the camp and recorded the experience in an autobiographical book which adopted a considerable measure of sociological and quantifiable analysis. His account of the role played by sport in the rationalisation of camp life is fascinating and throws new light on the athletic response of the British to adversity. Within twenty four hours of their imprisonment in filthy disused stables, the internees were playing impromptu football matches. Though ball games underwent a temporary ban, negotiations with the camp commandant came to fruition, and on 28 March 1915 Baron von Taube kicked off the inaugural match on the newly opened playing field. From then on, eight league games *a day* were played on the two pitches and each of the fourteen barrack blocks entered a first and second eleven to the competitions. Regulation uniforms in distinctive barrack colours were supplied from England, and the entire paraphernalia of British sporting administration was painstakingly reproduced. A forty-eight page handbook was printed for the 'Ruhleben Football Association' in Berlin and 22 specially commissioned silver cups and 122 medals were presented at the end of the first season. Special programmes were printed for important games, whilst the Golf Club, which had laid out five holes in a criss-cross pattern across the playing field, had membership cards and copies of "local rules" printed for players. Barrack 5 Sports Club even had specially personalised stationery for its inter-camp correspondence. Tennis, rugby, field-hockey and cricket were four of the other major sports, the latter complete with teams in white flannels and equipment provided from England as well as from Germany. None of this information has been detected in the contemporary literature other than the examples cited above. Clearly it would have fitted the mould of the British superior sporting spirit which the press went to great lengths to portray. As it stands, it remains a fascinating and apparently well-documented social and historical phenomenon that awaits further research. Of considerable interest, however, is an article from one of the internees at Ruhleben which concentrates solely on the inhumanity of the Germans to their prisoners and mentions sport at the camp only once, when revealing that the sports ground was closed for two days as a punishment by the guards.[61] As was the case with the football incidents between the German and English soldiers at Christmas, this report appears strangely out of touch with actuality.

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[53] *The War Illustrated*, vol.2 (1915), p.19.
[54] *The War Illustrated*, vol.2 (1915), p.344.
[55] *The War Illustrated*, vol.3 (1915), p.189.
[56] Sanders, p.135.
[57] Moynihan, p.200.
[58] *The Great War*, vol.8 (1917), p.389.

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[59] *The Great War*, vol.8 (1917), p.388.

[60] J.D.Ketchum, Ruhleben - A Prison Camp Society (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

In her paper, Marquis cites eight frequently used components of British anti-German propaganda from the First World War. By way of a summary, these categories have been reproduced in tabular form, and are accompanied by examples drawn from the British wartime press to demonstrate the full and vigourous usage of sport in this process.

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[61] A.D.MacLaren, "Berlin and Ruhleben During War", *The Contemporary Review*, vol.109 (February 1916), pp.214-222.

Table IV

SPORT IN THE BRITISH PROPAGANDA PROCESS

CATEGORY	SPORTING EXAMPLE
Stereotypes	The healthy, sporting British Tommy/Allied soldier
Pejorative names	Not applicable - all references positive.
Selection/ommission of facts	Germans don't play team games - allies do.
Atrocity stories	German officers duel instead of playing wholesome sports.
Slogans	"Spirit of sport that aids in winning the war"; 'play the game'; 'fair play'.
One-sided assertions	Britons and allies physically superior to German soldiers due to sport.
Pinpointing the enemy	Germans totally devoid of sportsmanship in war.
The 'Bandwagon Effect'	All sportsmen should join the army to fight - their sport will transfer directly to the battlefield.

All of the examples cited in this chapter illustrate the somewhat ambiguous relationship the national press had with the truth in time of war. Already subject to domestic censorship, the papers attempted to present the material available to them in its best light in order to both sustain national morale and circulation figures. The importance of a familiar and almost attractive face of war in maintaining both of these can be deduced from the answer a colleague of Lord Northcliffe gave to the question "What sells newspapers?". The reply was: "The first answer is 'war'. War not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it. So deep rooted is the fascination in war and all things appertaining to it that...a paper has only to be able to put on its placard 'a giant battle' for its sales to mount up".[62] At the same time as reporting the progress of the war, complexities were reduced to their simplest rhetorical formulae in order to cater to the widest possible audience in the most popular contemporary themes. This process has been discussed with reference to a 'public' - "a community of persons who share conceptions, interests and values, and who are significantly interdependent" - by Bitzer, who concludes :

> Rhetoric generates truths and values previously unknown to a public, gives voice to interests and principles whose locus is a public, serves as an instrument with which to test public truths and values and to select and justify public means and ends. In general, rhetoric at its best sustains wisdom in the life of a public.[63]

This process, advocating as it does notions of British superiority based upon incomplete and misleading athletic, military, racial and biological ideologies of dominance, can be seen as a functional manipulation of the British public to maintain enthusiasm and national unity during the war. Its crucial importance to the country in a time of national crisis is made clear by L.B.Brown, who comments "social power rests with those who can control and implement an ideology, whether by persecution and torment, or by education and propaganda".[64] In this manner, the apparent contradictions between sports and games on the one hand and the horrors of modern warfare on the other can be dispelled by offering a "false but seemingly adequate resolution to a real debate".[65] Whilst the importance of this process has been demonstrated in the British perception of sport and war during the years of the First World War, it should perhaps be put into a contemporary context. Private Peter McGregor of the 14th. Argyll and

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[62] Quoted in P.G. Griffith, "The Particular Character of Military Literature", *History Today*, vol.31 (June 1981), pp.62-63.
[63] Lloyd F.Bitzer, "Rhetoric and Public Knowledge" in Rhetoric, Philosophy and Literature: An Exploration (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1978), ed. Don Burks, pp.68-69.
[64] Brown, p.12.
[65] S.Burniston and C.Weedon, "Ideology, Subjectivity and the Artistic Text", in On Ideology (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p.201.

Sutherland Highlanders provides a fitting epitaph for this chapter in a letter home written on 24 August 1916:

> We sometimes see the *Sketch* and the *Mirror* - but I laugh at the fake photographs of the boys at the front - perhaps the folk at home would rather have the laughing Tommy, doing his duty, always smiling....[66]

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[66] Moynihan, p.26.

Chapter VII

ATHLETIC POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR

"In peace", they said, "prepare for war", my friend,
So you and I in those happy days
Began in sport - but for a serious end -
Our mimic warfare and our martial ways.[1]

Throughout the course of this study, the medium of poetry has figured prominently as a source of information pertaining to the topic of sport and warfare. Though recent research has identified the rich vein of athletic verse contained within the archives of private educational institutions on both sides of the Atlantic,[2] there has been as yet no concerted attempt to research the poetry of the Great War on a wider basis for references to sport and war. This is not necessarily surprising when the critical trends involving war poetry from this era are examined. Johnston notes, for instance: "Almost all of the critical and scholarly writing on the subject has been devoted to brief surveys or confined to individual studies of three or four of the best known poets".[3] This chapter will attempt to redress this imbalance, searching somewhat further afield than the traditional homes and haunts of athleticism. It will reveal the quality and prevalence of the athletic poetry whilst simultaneously imposing order on the material by means of thematic categorisation.[4] Though biographical information for many of the poets unearthed in this study is scant or non-existent, an effort will be made to identify those verses which illustrate a direct allegiance to the military assumptions of athleticism, and those which appear to be motivated by another ideology or group of factors. Of particular interest and of some novelty will be a body of athletic poetry conforming to the norms of athleticism, but written not by public schoolboys, but by women. Equally revealing are a group of poems having in common the unmistakeable evangelical components of nineteenth century 'muscular Christianity'.

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[1] F.W.D.Bendall, "To G.S.B., Killed in Action, December 1916", in Front Line Lyrics (London: Elkin Mathews, 1918).

[2] Most noteworthy at present are Mangan's Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, pp.191-196, and David Brown's forthcoming Dissertation on the Canadian private schools, pp.191-198.

[3] J.H.Johnston, English Poetry of the First World War (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.x.

[4] For the purposes of this study, the term 'athletic poetry' has been taken to refer to all poetry written between the years of 1914 - 1918 which contains allusions to, images of, or connections between sport and warfare.

The poetic response to the Great War was quite remarkable, both in volume and intensity. Though it varied considerably in quality, style and sentiment it remains nevertheless as an enduring testimony to the thoughts, dreams, fears and experiences of a generation touched in one way or another by the reverberations of the First World War. As a literary legacy, this body of material is extensive. Works by British poets contained in the 1921 Collection housed at the Birmingham Public Library alone number in excess of 1,200 volumes, while a recent bibliographical study by Catherine Reilly contains the names of more than 2,000 English war poets of the 1914 - 1918 era.[5] However, the very term 'war poetry' has been the topic of considerable discussion amongst literary researchers and an adequate definition of the genre is a necessary starting point. Lewis observes that the terms 'war poet' and 'war poetry' have undergone considerable transformation, and have altered from being original terms of empirical convenience to being invested with the implication that "a 'war poet' [is] in some way different from a poet....The implication is, of course, disparaging, as though a 'war poet' can be of relevance only to his immediate contemporaries".[6] Julian Symons reiterates this point, and in attempting to 'de-mystify' war poetry, establishes an operable definition which concludes that war poetry is not a specialised department of poetry, but more accurately "the poetry, comic or tragic, cynical or heroic, joyful, embittered or disillusioned" of people affected by the experience of war.[7] Such poetry was produced in enormous quantity by British citizens touched in some way by the war on both the Home and the Western Fronts. Their writings were often swiftly absorbed by an eager press, for the transmission of the war experience relied essentially on the printed word.[8] Publishing houses, too, responded to the availability of poetic comment on the war by providing a ready means to package, print and publish collections of verse quickly and at little cost. Many of the proceeds from sales of these volumes went, in fact, to war appeals and charities, providing yet another stimulus to the would-be poet. These volumes were consumed by a reading public whose thirst for material exposing the war had been whetted but remained unquenched.

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[5] E.Marsland, "Public Poetry of the First World War in an International Perspective", Diss. Alberta 1983, chapter two, pp.1-2.

[6] Quoted in V.L.Chang, "Images of War 1914 - 1918", Diss. Alberta 1971, p.4.

[7] Quoted in full in van Wyk Smith, p.2.

There were, however, more personal motivations that resulted in the medium of poetry undergoing an unprecedented ascendancy as a tool for the discussion, analysis and portrayal of war. Some poets, notably Owen, Gurney and Sassoon, had been writing verse prior to the war and simply exchanged their original material for that provided by their war experiences. Others, like John Bain, had never written, or indeed felt the inclination to write, a poem before their involvement in the war, but suddenly found it a convenient and expressive form in which to set down their thoughts, doubts or jubilations.[9] Some wrote to parents and loved ones, some for magazines and periodicals, and others simply for themselves. For one man poetry was a political statement, to another a personal reflection, whilst to a third it was merely a practical alternative, given the environment at the Front:

> On the whole, I should rather fight shy of attempting to write prose in war time; even at home it's almost impossible to put in enough work at it. Verse is the easiest thing out, especially in the trenches. When one is walking about the line one can hardly help making quite good verse all the time, and it doesn't need, won't stand in fact, more polishing. When you are a bit highly strung and excited, verse comes regular as the rations: but any sustained prose composition gives a strain one has no right to submit oneself to when in H.M.'s service.[10]

Regardless of its stimulus or of its form, the poetry of the First World War has steadfastly endured, and has certainly confounded the prediction of Poet Laureate Sir Henry Newbolt who wrote in 1924, "I don't think these shell-shocked war poems will move our grandchildren greatly".[11] In recent years in particular it has been the centrepiece of much admiration and discussion, and many of the young poets who fought and died in the conflict have been immortalised with their work in the literary consciousness of the English-speaking world. Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Charles Hamilton Sorley and Julian Grenfell are but a few of these young men whose poetry stands as an epitaph to their personal rendezvous with death during the war; Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden and David Jones are some of the better known survivors. For each, poetry was the testament through which order and truth, two nebulous and elusive factors, could be fashioned from their war experiences, be it the patriotic and romantic zeal of Rupert Brooke or the portrayal of the pity of war found in Owen. Just as it was for these popularised poets, so it was for the hundreds of lesser poets who also consigned their exultations and anxieties to verse. These unknown poets - men and women who shared the same experiences, suffered the same fears and celebrated the same victories as their better known comrades - also have a place in this study, for here the validity of their comments is not to be jeopardised by their poor metre or unduly euphemistic language. Regardless of the literary quality of the verse, it stands as a valuable social document in its historical context. However, before fallaciously condemning all poets of the First World War who made reference to sports and games to an undeserved obscurity, it should be made clear that several of the most prominent and certainly the most fully discussed poets of the era turned their attention to the image of the athlete in the war.

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[8] As Fussell points out, television and radio played a non-existent role in the communication process, and cinema only a marginally greater one; p.158.

[9] Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, pp.262-264.

[10] Charles Scott-Moncrieff to Alec Waugh, in C.K.Scott-Moncrieff: Memories and Letters, p.137.

Sassoon, with his intense concern for the common soldier - dumb, uncomplaining, and at the mercy of a nation at home which had no conception of the hell which he daily endured - attempts to reconcile the paradox of the ordinary man's dual existence in the trenches and at home by dwelling in part on his love of sport:

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[11] Newbolt to Lady Hylton, quoted in Marsland, chapter one, p.5.

> Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
> They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.
> I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
> And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
> Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats
> And moved by hopeless longing to regain....[12]

Later, in "The Redeemer", Sassoon portrays the British soldier as an earthly embodiment of the Christ, enduring suffering for the sake of those he loved. Significantly, his pleasures are simple and his lifestyle physical and moral: "...an English soldier, white and strong / Who loved his time like any simple chap, / Good days of work and sport and homely song..".[13]

In poems by both Owen and Rosenberg the athlete is addressed more directly and symbolically, standing impotently against the futile and abject horror of a war which daily claims men regardless of their health or fitness. As such, the athlete epitomises the inhumanity of modern warfare as he, with his proud body and physical vitality, cannot escape death or mutilation. In Owen's haunting "Disabled", the young athlete "...sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark / And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey, / Legless, sewn short at elbow." Now at the mercy of a world which wants only to forget what it has done to him, he reminisces on the events that brought him to the war and, in doing so, encapsulates the social values which Owen was later to celebrate as "The old Lie : *Dulce et decorum est/ Pro Patria mori*"[14]:

> One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,
> After the matches, carried shoulder-high
> It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,
> He thought he'd better join. - He wonders why.
> Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts,
> That's why; and may be, too, to please his Meg;
> Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts
> He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;
> Smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years.

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[12] S.Sassoon, "Dreamers", in Arthur E.Lane, An Adequate Response (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p.107.
[13] Quoted in Lane, p.115.
[14] Jon Stallworthy, Wilfred Owen. A Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). Owen wrote to his mother, "The famous Latin tag means of course *It is sweet and meet* to die for one's country. Sweet! and *decorous*!", p.228.

And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.

Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits
Thanked him; and then inquired about his soul.[15]

Isaac Rosenberg echoes Owen's sentiments, poetically addressing a trench rat on the parapet that will, the poet believes, outlive the other human inhabitants of the trench, destined for death despite their apparent virility. The rat, free to scuttle past the corpses strewn in no-man's land, prompts Rosenberg to comment:

It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.[16]

The image of the doomed athlete is, however, not a dominant one in the poetry of the Great War. Even when the poem takes the form of an elegy, for the most part the athlete is afforded victory in death, not defeat. One particular strain of athletic verse attributed such triumph not only to physical prowess, but to spiritual as well. These poems stand as paragons of the 'muscular Christian' faith - the evangelical adjunct to the ideology of athleticism. Muscular Christianity as an athletic epithet appears to have been first employed by an unknown reviewer attempting to define the moral and religious characteristics possessed by Charles Kingsley's strong, manly, upright and physical protagonists in his novels.[17] The phrase was later applied to Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays following its publication in 1857 and remained at the forefront of the athletic debate for the remainder of the century.[18] However, the cross-currents of athleticism and muscular Christianity are by no means synonymous. Though both advocate the character training of the young man by means of an immersion in team games, only the latter envisages that the product of this baptismal moulding will emerge as a moral and manly *Christian*; such orthodox spiritual faith is distinctly lacking in the examples and definitions of athleticism considered earlier in this study. As both Mangan and Gathorne-Hardy have shown, life in the games-obsessed public schools of Victorian and Edwardian Britain displayed far more elements of a brutal paganism than of Christian charity.[19] Nevertheless, the public schools had, since their inception, been traditional suppliers of young men to the Church, just as they had to the army and the civil service, and with so many of the headmasters being men of the cloth the concept and practise of Christian manliness survived the religious indifference of athleticism. In its purest form, a muscular Christian can be distinguished from his athletic counterpart - or "muscleman" as Hughes refers to him - in the following manner:

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[15] Quoted in Stallworthy, pp.224-6.
[16] Isaac Rosenberg, "Break of Day in the Trenches", in John Ferguson, ed., War and the Creative Arts (London: The Macmillan Press, 1972), p.214.
[17] Gerald Redmond, "Alarm, Amusement and Contempt: Early English Critics of Muscular Christianity", p.2.

> ...the only point in common between the two being, that both hold it to be a good thing to have strong and well-exercised bodies, ready to be put at the shortest notice to any work of which bodies are capable, and to do it well. Here all likeness ends; for the "muscleman" seems to have no belief whatever as to the purposes for which his body has been given him....Whereas, as far as I know, the least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man's body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men.[20]

Hughes and Kingsley display muscular Christianity to its best advantage - a simple and unaffected creed that seeks the spiritual elevation of the young man through a life of hard knocks and sound lessons on the games field to eventual Christian fulfillment. It is seen in its worst light in the histrionic excesses of the following passage, which is by no means exceptional for the genre:

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[18] Redmond, p.3.

[19] J.A.Mangan, "Social Darwinism, Sport and English Upper Class Education", *Stadion*, vol.6 (Autumn 1982), 92-115; Jonathon Gathorne-Hardy, chapter five, section six, "Discipline: Beating and Its Effects", pp.108-112.

[20] Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown at Oxford (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1885), p.113.

> Put your whole soul into the game and make it your very life. Hit clean and hard at every loose ball. 'Steal a run' whenever you safely can, for the least bit of work that helps anyone nearer to God is blessed work, and gladdens the Captain's heart. Be alert and ready, and you will keep up your end. Lay on hard, and you will run up a grand score. And when 'time' is called you will 'bring out your bat', your conscience will say 'Well done', and those you have cheered and helped will say, 'A good man! Thank God for such an innings!' Aye, and when on the resurrection morning you come out of the pavilion, leaving your playing clothes behind you, and robed like your glorious Captain-King, you and all the hosts of God will see and understand your score as you cannot now, and your joy will be full as you hear the Captain, 'the innumerable company of angels' and the whole redeemed Church of God greet you with the words, 'WELL PLAYED, SIR!'[21]

Examples from both polarities are evident in the athletic poetry of the Great War.

As the British Church struggled to find a Christian justification for the war in their prolific publications in this era, the Scottish clergy at least had the benefits of warfare brought to their attention at the Annual General Assembly by Sir George Adam Smith. In his closing address, he told the Scottish churchmen:

> The mere athletic value of the war has been enormous. When we see our young men returning from only a few months of military exercise, transformed always in body and often in mind, we realise how much of the national strength we have thrown away during years of peace through neglect by the state, the Universities and other institutions of provisions for training.[22]

However, this rather utilitarian viewpoint belied the spiritual aspect of the individual's struggle in the war which was appearing in some of the poetry generated by the conflict. It is better represented in Harold Begbie's tribute to the Boy Scout movement, which traces the young lad's progress from street urchin to national saviour:

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[21] Rev. Thomas Waugh, The Cricket Field of Christian Life (1894) p.148, in Christopher Brookes, English Cricket. The Game and Its Players Through the Ages (London : Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1978), p.141.

[22] G.A.Smith, The War, the Nation and the Church (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1916), p.38.

> ...a trumpet song from the meadows, and the city rang with a shout
> And the boy leapt into his boyhood with the magical name of Scout;
> Suddenly braced his body, suddenly found his soul,
> And vaulted to Eldorado at the end of a hefty pole.
>
> There came to him men of glory who spoke of a goodly game,
> Who told of a life in the open and the pride of a gallant fame,
> And he gave them his soul and body to discipline, shape and train,
> And they taught him the works of God and the use of a Cockney brain.[23]

Looking down on these "young lions, whelps of the ancient breed", the immortal heroes of Brittania's past smile down "from the fields of heaven", content in the knowledge that the nation is secure in the hands of young Britons who are morally and physically strong.[24]

Though Begbie does not directly address himself to the afterlife of the Christian sportsman-soldier, two other poets give an indication that redemption and eternal life await the sporting war hero who falls in battle. Everard Owen adopts the ur-old Christian image of the Trinity in his poem, "Three Hills", to show that spiritual and physical strength, moral courage and the capacity for self-sacrifice will not go unrewarded by the Son of God. The first stanza illustrates that the path to eternal life commences at the foot of the pavilion steps :

> There is a hill in England,
> Green fields and a school I know,
> Where the balls fly fast in the summer
> And the whispering Elm trees grow.
> A little hill, a dear hill,
> And the playing fields below.

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[23] Harold Begbie, "Boy Scout", in Fighting Lines and Various Reinforcements (London: Constable, 1914), p.38.
[24] Begbie, p.40.

There is a hill in Flanders
Heaped with a thousand slain,
Where the shells fly night and noontide
And the ghosts that died in vain.
A little hill, a hard hill,
To the souls that died in pain.

There is a hill in Jewry,
Three crosses pierce the sky,
On the midmost He is dying
To save all those who die.
A little hill, a kind hill,
To souls in jeopardy.[25]

Frederic Bendall, whose lines in memory of a friend killed in action open this chapter, reiterates this spiritual victory of the athlete over death in the final section of his poem:

So. It has come. Your dreams were all too true.
I have played many games with you. They are done.
But this I know, and knowing, smile - that you
Have played the greatest game of all - and won.
So fare you well, my friend. Indeed, I know
That you fare well. It must be thus - for He
Who died to make men good will have it so
For all of those who died to make men free.[26]

Bendall's poignant eulogy to a fallen comrade is a touching and personal tribute to the strength of his own faith in the midst of war. Of quite another cadence is the volume of verse by C.T.Studd, an Old Etonian and a celebrated cricketer, whose poems are characterised by a missionary zeal and trite, tub-thumping rhythm. For Studd, the battlefields of France were symbolic with those spiritual battlefields which he had faced in the Belgian Congo in 1913 - huns and heathens alike were to be overcome by the sportsman-soldier, armed variously with a rifle, cricket bat or crucifix. Exhortations to 'play the game' abound in the verse, as the reader is reminded to look for his faith to Jesus, the Holy Bible and the resolute Apostles:

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[25] Everard Owen, Three Hills and Other Poems (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1916).
[26] Bendall, "To G.S.B., Killed in Action, December 1916".

Let us learn from Christ's Apostles
And play as they played the game;
'Twas not being nice but sacrifice
That won them deathless fame.[27]

In his invocation to the reader to join the mission to publish news of the salvation, Studd employs an elaborate analogy embracing both cricket and war imagery that deserves quoting in full:

Let's abolish our tame stonewalling,
And play for a win, not a draw;
We must go in for hurricane hitting,
Or we'll lose as we've lost before.

For Christ was a resolute hitter,
And so were Stephen and Paul;
They so warmed the devil's fingers
That he scarce could hold the ball.

They didn't play selfish in those good days
They played for their side instead;
And they ran such really impossible runs
That the devil quite lost his head.

They didn't wear pads and gloves those days,
You just couldn't make them afraid;
And they never stopped to look at the clock
Till the winning hit was made.

Now if we played the game like that,
Do you think we shouldn't win?
Of course we should, and, that being so,
Anything else is sin.[28]

The athletic war poems which contain elements of muscular Christianity are clearly a diverse collection, ranging from the didactic fervour and fanaticism of Studd to the personal affirmation of faith by Owen and Bendall. Though far from being a majority viewpoint, they illustrate that the 'gospel' of muscular Christianity was continuing to flourish amongst its twentieth century 'disciples'.

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[27] C.T.Studd, Quaint Rhymes for the Battlefield by a Quondam Cricketer (London : James Clarke & Co., 1914), p.83.
[28] Studd, "Without Excuse!", pp.85-86.

A more vocal group that does not appear to have a celebrated nineteenth century parallel is that of women who endorsed athleticism in their poetry during the Great War. Of the poems considered in this section, only one figures in Catherine Reilly's recent and unique anthology of 79 women poets of the First World War.[29] Five individual female poets have been identified, each of whom adheres rather uncannily to one or all of these common characteristics in their writings: the gap in their lives left by the men who have gone to the Front is portrayed in terms of empty playing fields or idle bats and balls; the assumptions of athleticism regarding a positive and immediate transfer of abilities from playing field to battlefield are readily confirmed and celebrated; death in battle is not to be feared, for the men possess the schoolboy's contagious courage that is shaped on the games field; the woman's role is self-defined as passive and divorced from the actualities of battle, although several of the poets convey a longing that they, too, might become a man in order to share the experience of sacrifice in war. All four of these common traits are present in Katharine Tynan's "The Golden Boy", an unabashed athletic glorification of the public schoolboy in wartime:

In times of peace, so clean and bright,
And with a new-washed morning face,
He walked Pall Mall, a goodly sight,
The finished flower of all the race.

Or through Bond Street and Picadilly,
Went spick and span, without a soil,
As careless as the July lily
That spins not, neither does she toil.

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[29] Catherine W.Reilly, Scars Upon My Heart. Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War (London: Virago Press, 1981). The author has actually identified 532 women poets in her earlier bibliographic study - some 25% of the total number discovered and catalogued.

He took his soldiering as sport,
And beauteous in his mufti stirred
Romance in the simple female sort
That loves a guardsman or a lord.

And now, knee-deep in muddy water,
Unwashed, unshaven, see him go!
His garments stained with mud and slaughter
Would break the heart of Savile Row.

The danger's in his blood like wine,
The old heroic passion leaps;
The son of the mighty fighting line
Goes glad whatever woman weeps.

He plays the game, winning or losing,
As in the playing fields at home;
This picnic's nothing of his choosing,
But since it's started, let it come!

He lives his hours with keenest zest,
And midst the flying death he spares
A laugh to the light-heart schoolboy jest,
Mingled with curses and with prayers.

Gay as at Eton or at Harrow,
Counts battles as by goals or runs :
God keep him from Death's flying arrows
To give his England fighting sons.[30]

W.M.Letts provides several poems that once again centre upon the athletic character of the cream of British manhood. In her best known poem, "The Spires of Oxford", the poet describes her feelings on passing through Oxford during the war, noting that the "careless boys at play" had sacrificed their youthful existence to go and fight:

They left the peaceful river,
The cricket field, the quad,
The shaven lawns of Oxford

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[30] Katharine Tynan, Flowers of Youth - Poems in War Time (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1915).

To seek a bloody sod -
They gave their merry youth away
For Country and for God.[31]

Her attention to the concept of sacrifice permeates much of her poetry. In "To a Soldier in Hospital" she addresses a young man whose stoicism and good humour in the face of great pain she cannot help but admire. Despite the tenderness of the later stanzas, however, the opening lines of the poem betray the common formula:

Courage came to you with your boyhood's grace
Of ardent life and limb.
Each day new dangers steeled you to the test
To ride, to climb, to swim.
Your hot blood taught you carelessness of death
With every breath.

So when you went to play another game
You could not but be brave :
An Empire's team, a rougher football field,
The end - perhaps your grave.
What matter? On the winning of a goal
You staked your soul.[32]

Eva Dobell's "Night Duty" displays a far more realistic view of the hospitalised athlete. In her stanza reproduced here, the young man's athletic prowess is afforded a temporality that ended with the onset of his wound. Like Owen and Rosenberg, Dobell portrays the athlete as a broken victim of the war, not an eternal hero :

And one laughs out with an exultant joy.
An athlete he - Maybe his young limbs strain
in some remembered game, and not in vain
To win his side the goal - Poor crippled boy,
Who in the waking world will never run again.[33]

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[31] W.M.Letts, The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems (New York: E.P.Dutton & Co., 1915).
[32] W.M.Letts, Hallow E'en, and Other Poems of the War (London: Smith, Elder, 1916).
[33] Reilly, Scars Upon My Heart, p.33.

Quite the opposite course is steered by Letts, who has a vision of "great celestial games" under the canopy of Heaven for those who fall in the conflict. In "Golden Boys" she pursues this theme, picturing the splendour of what can only be described as an ethereal public school sports day beyond the grave:

Not harps and palms for these, O God,
Nor endless rest within the courts of Heaven -
These happy boys who left the football field,
The hockey ground, the river, the eleven,
In a far grimmer game, with high elated souls
To score their goals.

Let these, O God, still test their manhood's strength,
Wrestle and leap and run,
Feel sea and wind and sun;
With Cherubim contend;
The timeless morning spend
In great celestial games.
Let there be laughter and a merry noise
Now that the fields of Heaven shine
With all these golden boys.[34]

Several poems avoid the romanticised images preferred by Tynan and Letts, and while retaining their attachment to sport, adopt a more personal and sentimental tone. "Sleep Well", by Miss N.L.Eley is a dedication to her brother, a young officer who was at Queen's College, Cambridge, at the outbreak of war and had since seen service at the Dardanelles, in Egypt and in France. Her poem is full of the images of her brother's bouyant youth which she guards so preciously, hoping against hope for his safe return:

Sleep well, dear brother! - here in your old room,
A tender radiance, by the moon diffused,
A light serene, with kindly shadows blent,
Is over all that you have loved and used -
Here - sombre books well thumbed by boyish hands,
And prizes, hardly won thro' studious years,

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[34] Letts, The Spires of Oxford, p.16.

Last season's bat, well oiled, your cap, your clothes -
And on the walls I trace thro' a mist of tears
Your treasur'd pictures, here some choice cartoon,
Here mem'ries glad enshrined in those bright scenes
Of sport, and groups of boys - and there the card
With pencilled cross to mark your room at "Queens'".[35]

Grace Golden's poem, "The Sister" stems from an identical concern as that of Eley; the difference in tone, however, is considerable. Here, the poet expresses her frustration at being tied to "a woman's game" instead of joining her brother in the fray. The poem is a remarkable testimony to the disappointment of a woman who clearly possesses many of the qualities inherent in athleticism and most admired in young men, and yet who is shackled and impotent in her own eyes by her very femininity:

Was there ever a game we did not share,
Brother of mine?
Or a day when I did not play you fair,
Brother of mine?
"As good as a boy", you used to say,
And I was eager for the fray,
And as loath to cheat or run away,
Brother of mine!

You are playing a game that is straight and true,
Brother of mine,
And I'd give my soul to stand next to you,
Brother of mine.
The spirit, indeed, is still the same ;
I should not shrink from the battle's flame,
Yet here I stay - at a woman's game
Brother of mine.

If that last price must needs be paid,
Brother of mine,
You will go forward, unafraid,
Brother of mine!
Death can so small a part destroy,
You will have known the fuller joy -
Ah! would that I had been born a boy,

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[35] N.L.Eley, "Sleep Well", in Told in the Huts: The Y.M.C.A. Gift Book (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1916), pp.89-90.

Brother of mine![36]

Nora Bomford expands upon the frustration of Grace Golden in her vocal and resolute condemnation of contemporary sex-role stereotyping :

> Sex, nothing more, constituent no greater
> Than those which make an eyebrow's start or fall,
> In origin, sheer accident, which later,
> Decides the biggest differences of all.
> And, through a war, involves the chance of death
> Against a life of physical normality -
> So dreadfully safe! O, damn the Shibboleth
> Of sex! God knows we've equal personality.
> Why should men face the dark while women stay
> To live and laugh and meet the sun each day.[37]

Previously overlooked, the role of women in the propagation of athletic war poetry, and thereby the dissemination of ideological elements of athleticism and muscular Christianity, is clearly an important one that requires further attention. As Reilly has shown, the contributions of women war poets generally has been neglected and should be more closely analysed. She illustrates their previously untold importance by pointing out that at least four women were writing 'protest poetry' against the war before either Owen or Sassoon.[38] For the purposes of further study in the field of sport and war, biographical information is a necessary first step in attempting to disclose what prompted these poems, and for whom they were intended. Nevertheless, thematically they exhibit considerable cohesion and have undoubtedly enriched this examination of the genre. They can now be profitably compared with a third group of poems, written by male poets, which celebrate the *alma maters* of the young soldiers and the links between school and battlefield.

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[36] Grace Mary Golden, Backgrounds (Oxford: Blackwell, 1917), p.21.
[37] Nora Bomford, Poems of a Pantheist (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918), p.107.
[38] Reilly, Scars Upon My Heart, pp.xxxiv-xxxv.

J.M.Rose-Troup's "Harrow's Honour" was written in captivity in Friedberg in Hessen in 1916, a period which he refers to as "A weary time, a dreary time, a time of hopes and fears". Even during his incarceration, however, he advances his pride in his school and in those Old Harrovians who continue to serve England in her hour of need:

Mourn not for those whose names are writ in gold
They fought for England, gladly gave their all.
Kept Harrow's honour spotless as of old,
Nor feared to answer to the last great call.

They showed the way to more, their names will ring
Through all succeeding years of Harrow's fame,
Whatever changes after years may bring
Their sons will follow up and play the game.[39]

Eric Wilkinson's "Rugby Football" is an emphatic endorsement of the role of the school, and school sports in particular, in building a breed of Englishmen who will triumph in the war, come what may. In the opening stanza, the poet, dismal and depressed in the trenches, receives the football match team list from his old school, Ilkley Grammar. Its effect is to transport him "...off and away on memory's track" to reminisce with pleasure upon the qualities of life which he holds most dear, and those which he feels are most useful to the nation in time of war:

She makes her men and she sends them forth
O proud old mother of many sons!
The Ilkley breed has proved its worth
Wherever the bond of Empire runs;
But near or far the summons clear
Has sought them out from town and heath,
They've met the foemen with a cheer,
And face to face have smiled on death.
They are fighting still to the grand old rule,
That heart and courage must never fail -
If they fall, there are more where the grey stone school

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[39] Quoted in E.B.Osborn ed., The Muse in Arms (London: John Murray, 1917), pp.176-177.

> Looks out on the broad green vale.
> Can you hear the call? Can you hear the call
> That drowns the roar of Krupp?
> There are many who fight and many who fall
> Where the big guns play at the Kaiser's ball,
> But hark! - can you hear it? Over all -
> Now, school! Now school! Play up![40]

These lines from Wilkinson's second stanza are echoed in S.Barrington Gates' "Lines Written for a Norfolk School Song" which, like "Rugby Football" and *"Vitai Lampada"* before that, celebrates the central role of the playing fields in building splendid character in its proteges - a splendour that is global in its magnitude through the influence of the Old Boys around the Empire. The qualities depicted in Gates' account of the great school matches are exactly those vaunted in so much of the athletic poetry of the war:

> Beat up the drums to a battle song
> Of the great games lost and won,
> When the wind and the rain were sweet and strong
> And never a man was done
> Till the road to the goal was a road of mud
> And tired limbs braced with a surge of blood
> For the last stern rush that broke the hush
> To the long proud cry of "School".[41]

E.B.Osborn, editor of an anthology in which the previous school poems appear, explains in his introduction to the collection that such poems were selected to throw light on the British soldier's "racial predilection" for honouring "games and field sports in which he acquired the basal elements of all true discipline - confidence in his companions and readiness to sacrifice the desire for personal distinction to the common interest of his team, which is, of course, a mimic army in being".[42]

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[40] Quoted in Osborn, pp.208-211.
[41] S.Barrington Gates, Cargo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1918), p.60.
[42] Osborn, p.ix.

Several other poems concentrate on the quality of the schoolboy and his response to the war rather than that of the educational institution in which he was reared. W.Snow, in a poem originally published in the *Spectator*, commemorates the generous spirit of self-sacrifice possessed by a former pupil whose name appeared in the casualty lists:

You, killed in action, leading men!
I hardly yet believe it true :
For me you're still the boy of ten,
Blue-eyed and curly-haired, I knew.

---------------------------- -

The years passed by, and Oxford took
The charge your Public School laid down;
One happy year, and you forsook -
For duty called - the magic gown.

Of course you were the first to go :
You never were the sort to shirk.
That was no time for books, and so
You turned to more important work.

"No life is short, thus nobly spent,
No hero's death is permature [sic]".[43]

Another account of the young soldier leaving to fight at the Front almost parodies the famous couplet of Richard Lovelace in his medieval dedication, "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars" (1649), where he closes his poem "I could not love thee, dear, so much, / Loved I not honour more".[44] One section of Richard Legalliene's "The Silk-Hat Soldier" reads as follows:

One threw his cricket bat aside, one left the ink to dry;

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[43] "To S.K., Killed in Action", in "A Crown of Amaranth", eds., Erskine MacDonald & S.Gertrude Ford (London: Erskine MacDonald, 1917), p.27.
[44] Quoted in J.Paul Hunter, ed., The Norton Introduction to Poetry (New York: W.W.Norton & Co., 1981), p.451.

All peace and play
He's put away,
And bid his love goodbye -
"O mother mine!
O sweetheart mine!
No man of yours am I -
If I love not England well enough for England to die!"[45]

Two other poets assign the development of such fervent patriotism more directly to the sporting experience of the schoolboy. Each makes clear the poet's belief that it is sport which is in some way responsible for the accelerated maturity of the boy at war. Experience in games is therefore deemed to have formulated a metaphysical duality in the schoolboy-soldier; through his training on the playing fields he has learnt loyalty, teamwork and a capacity for leadership which contribute to his successful command of men senior in age and experience to him at the Front; however, he is also depicted as retaining his boyish fondness for the pleasures of games, which the poets transcribe as a reckless disregard for personal safety in the face of adversity. War is thus portrayed by the poets as another sport for him to conquer - the ultimate game, in fact. In Arthur Hall's poem this process is presented to the reader using the terminology of cricket:

And then again you scarce would know
The Bowler of a year ago,
For whom so many had to yield
The crease on Newland's playing field.
Was it a look beyond his years?
He who the end of innings nears
May sometimes that expression wear.

Scarce more than schoolboys! Yet there lies
Something within their laughing eyes
You look for it in the veteran's gaze.
Each, light of heart as if he plays
Cricket, flings in the face of Death

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[45] Richard Legalliene, The Silk-Hat Soldier and Other Poems (London: John Lane - The Bodley Head, 1915).

A jest, - and smiling yields his breath![46]

Francis Smith adopts a measured and economical construction in his poem, "The Young Soldier", yet each line and phrase embody the distilled and popularised essence of the schoolboy-soldier in the Great War:

Fresh rosy face, clean limbs and steady eye
        Watchful and clear;
Boy as to years, man in his courage true;
        Knowing no fear
On playing field, he faced the stern foe Death
        With jest contagious;
Fought his fights clean and when pain came his way,
        Still smiled courageous.[47]

Smiling or unsmiling, a great many young men met their deaths during the Great War. Some of them were commemorated by friends and admirers in elegiac poetry which once again drew upon the language and imagery of sport to mourn their passing.[48] A fellow Kings College student of Rupert Brooke dedicated his own volume of poetry to the memory of the romantic doyen of the nation. In the most vaunted poem of the collection, "The Trenches", the poet has the symbolic figure of "*juvenis quidam*: (the youth)"
announce:

If I go? The great adventure's waiting.
War, riskiest, most exhilerating
Of all man's sports, the sportsman has today :

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[46] Arthur Vine Hall, The Submarine and the Aeroplane (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell & Son, 1917), p.33.
[47] F.W.Smith, The Great Sacrifice, and Other Poems (London: Erskine MacDonald, 1917).
[48] Robert Graves, in an early poem, wrote of the death of a friend in "The Dead Fox Hunter"; however, it is difficult to deduce with hindsight whether the poet is referring to a fallen comrade, or the death of a favourite horse: "So if Heaven had no hunt before he came / Why it must find one now: / If any shirk and doubt they know the game / There's one to teach them how: / And the whole host of seraphim complete / Must joy in scarlet to his opening meet." Robert Graves, Over the Brazier (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1916).

Sport naked, pure and bloody-fronted,
For Man the Hunter - man the hunted,
Sport for the King of all the beasts of prey![49]

This poem's naive enthusiasm dates it considerably now, but its jaunty and egotistical style was not unique in poems which utilised sports and games to encapsulate the memory of a fallen comrade. Two in particular adopt this tone as they mourn the death of some of England's greatest sportsmen. The brothers Ross-Lewin penned the following offering on hearing the news in 1915 of the death of the grand old man of English cricket, Dr.W.G.Grace:

On Flander's plains, at Dardanelles,
Or toiling on the Tigris wave,
Where Eden first our parents gave
A refuge from those sun-burned dells,
Today men speak of W.G.,
E.M., G.F. and W.G.
Of that immortal three!

In sap and trench, in fire and flame,
Or Fleet triumphant on the sea,
Old Britain's sons aye play the game,
And mourn today for W.G.
We keep our end up manfully
And ever leave all hellish work
To Teuton and to Turk.

For Waterloo on playing fields was won,
And in the peaceful times betwixt
The Empire that knows no setting sun
Was trained by games to hold the bayonet fixed.
In war or peace the same,
Just play the game
That leads to victory![50]

William Berridge's "*Meminisse Iuvabit*" is somewhat better constructed than the less than lyrical elegy to W.G.Grace, yet it nevertheless betrays an over-simplistic rhetoric which serves to sully the memory of those famous athletes who had fallen during the war:

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[49] Osbert Burdett, Songs of Exhuberance, Together with 'The Trenches' Op.I, (London: A.C.Fifield, 1915), p.15.
[50] The Brothers Ross-Lewin, In Britain's Need (London: Erskine MacDonald, 1917).

Our defenders are numbered in millions,
And cricket is lending its aid,
In discharging a shot
And in 'stopping the rot'
And bowling the deadly grenade :
But from Lord's and the Oval's pavilions
Many, many a one do we mourn;
And the glorious game
Will be never the same,
For the master of cricket has gone.

Oh again for the days of Doherty,
Roper Barrett and Ritchie and Gore,
With the shouts of the crowd
And the utterance loud
Of the Umpire announcing the score :
But from Wimbledon ("Forty, owe thirty!")
The centre court glory has fled;
And no more shall we know
Joys of long, long ago,
For Anthony Wilding is dead.

In an age of civilian leisure
What great resolutions we made
To recover our swing
And supremacy wring
From Vardon and Taylor and Braid :
But from games that afforded us pleasure
We are driven to rifle and gun;
Never more to be seen
On the tee or the green
Till we've finished the game of the Hun.[51]

Reinforcing the image of the warrior-cricketer is James Norman Hall's splendid "The Cricketers of Flanders", which encapsulates the very best elements of this jingoistic genre:

The first to climb the parapet
With "cricket balls" in either hand;
The first to vanish in the smoke

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[51] W.E.Berridge, Verses (London: Holburn, 1916), p.40.

Of God-forsaken No Man's Land;
First at the wire and soonest through,
First at those red-mouthed hounds of hell,
The Maxims, and the first to fall,
- They do their bit and do it well.

Full sixty yards I've seen them throw
With all that nicety of aim
They learned on British cricket-fields.
Ah, bombing is a Briton's game!
Shell-hole to shell-hole, trench to trench,
"Lobbing them over" with an eye
As true as though it *were* a game
And friends were having tea close by.

His shrapnel helmet set atilt,
His bombing waistcoat sagging low,
His rifle slung across his back:
Poised in the very act to throw.
And let some graven legend tell
Of those weird battles in the West
Wherein he put old skill to use,
And played old games with sterner zest.

Thus should he stand, reminding those
In less-believing days, perchance,
How Britain's fighting cricketers
Helped bomb the Germans out of France.
And other eyes than ours would see;
And other hearts than ours would thrill;
And others say, as we have said:
"A sportsman and a soldier still!".[52]

From an examination of those works presented above, together with those reproduced earlier in this study, it is clear that the athletic poem, although not dominating by any means the poetry of the war, was nevertheless a popular and comparatively common vehicle through which to express and glorify the military potential of the sportsman-soldier during the First World War. Though these poems have been segregated into convenient categories above, their overall thematic concord is unmistakable. Almost without exception they perpetuate and propagate the military elements inherent in the code of athleticism, often glorifying the young sportsman's death in battle in a manner which is identical to the tones of the sermon preached in a pre-war Harrow school novel: "To die young, clean, ardent; to die swiftly, in perfect health...to die scaling heights...is that not a cause for joy rather than sorrow?"[53] The proliferation of images of laughing-eyed boys flinging a contemptuous jest to the foe as they commit themselves to certain death is too prevalent to be merely coincidental. Such poems are remarkable and previously undervalued and unexposed elements in the enormous communication process that reinforced and sustained a palatable image of violent and indiscriminatory death amongst the nation's youth.

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[52] James Norman Hall, "The Cricketers of Flanders", in A Treasury of War Poetry (New York: Hodder & Staughton, 1917), ed. George Herbert Clarke, pp.286-287. My thanks to Linda Veitch for making this material available to me.

Of the poets themselves, little at present can be added. Obviously, the poems of Wilkinson, Rose-Troup, Studd and Tynan link them in some manner with the public school system, thereby providing evidence of a direct diffusion of athleticism into the poetry of the war. This explanation cannot be advanced with any certainty for the remainder of the poems examined here, many of which by nature of their poor construction and limited vocabulary would suggest an author of a less-than-thorough education. Nor should it be deduced that all public school athlete-soldier-poets used images of games and facets of athleticism in their writings. There are numerous exceptions to this assumption, of whom Julian Grenfell, an Old Etonian and highly reputed amateur boxer whilst at the Front, and Charles Hamilton Sorley, an ex-Marlborough pupil who ran and played field hockey, are two of the most prominent. Just as this study has shown that athleticism was not the sole force acting upon British society's equating of sport with war during the period of 1914 - 1918, so it would appear that a similar explanation is required with respect to the motivating factors behind the athletic war poetry. Lacking the necessary resources to adequately research the biographies of these poets, and having no point of secondary reference in this innovative field, this study of the athletic poetry of the Great War must conclude with a call for a fuller investigation of a genre which appears to promise rich findings for the social historian of sport.

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[53] H.A.Vachell, The Hill (1905), quoted in Simon, p.111. Vachell was later to loose his own son, killed whilst serving with the R.F.C. in 1915.

Chapter VIII

POSTSCRIPT: ARMISTICE AND AFTERMATH

The First World War was officially concluded at 5:00 a.m. on 11 November 1918 when German delegates put their signatures to an armistice at the railway station of Rethondes in the Forest of Compiegne.[1] The 'war to end wars' was over, but at an awful cost. In figures considering only the known dead per capita of population, one person in every twenty-eight in France, one in thirty-two in Germany and one in fifty-seven in England had been killed during the course of the war. Millions more bore the physical and mental scars of battle throughout Europe and beyond.

As the onus of the aftermath shifted slowly from the troops to the statesmen and politicians, one Elwood S.Brown, a former Y.M.C.A. official who had been stationed with the American troops in France in the official capacity of 'Director of Athletics' worked furiously to bring his vision of a "military Olympics" to fruition. Thus it was that between 22 June and 6 July 1919 that the Inter-Allied Games were held in a purpose-built stadium on the outskirts of Paris, named in honour of American General John J.Pershing. Playing to crowds which totalled almost half a million, the games afforded 1,500 athletes from eighteen of the victorious nations competition in some twenty four sports. Germany and her defeated associates were excluded from the games, which were clearly a celebration of allied unity and victory.[2] In another sense, this sporting festival in the wake of war can be seen to have something in common with the ancient funeral games for Patroclus, Pelias and countless other Greek soldier heroes, which sought to commemorate the fallen in terms of the earthly athletic accomplishments of those who survived the battle.[3] In either case, the event was perhaps a fitting epitaph to the interrelationship of sport, games and the First World War.

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[1] Woodward, pp.430-431.

[2] Baker, pp.209-210.

[3] Rachel Sargent Robinson, Sources for the History of Greek Athletics (Privately printed, 1955), pp.1-29.

Secondary research on the role of sport in British society for this period is almost universal in its agreement that the conclusion of the war signified the end to a widespread acceptance of the military epithets of athleticism. Vance claims, "There were none to replace the 'lost generation' - the manly cricketers and rugby players who died in the trenches",[4] while Gathorne-Hardy concludes, "There is a sense, because of the blithe, almost carefree heroism with which they [the public schoolboys] went to such terrible slaughter, in which the battle of the Somme was lost on the playing fields of Sherborne".[5] The shortcomings of both statements can quickly be revealed. Although public school casualties were undoubtedly high - 1,150 out of 5,600 Old Etonians who served in the war were killed, for instance - the argument that the nation's potential sportsmen had been decimated is fallacious.[6] H.W.Garrod's poems give a better perspective on the 'lost generation' question. The poet, a professor at Oxford University, reveals that there were no shortages of young men to fill the places left by those who died during the war, but that the dead are too greatly missed and fondly remembered to allow the newcomers access to their hallowed haunts :

"Intruders I"

One day, I knew, it had to be :
Sooner or later I must see
Another race of men invade
Rooms which the men I knew had made,
With books, with pictures on the wall,
With pipes and caps, with bat or ball,
Obscurely individual.
I hate your steps upon the stair,
Your vacant voices on the air.
Who asked you to come back at all,
Or why should bayonet and ball
Be kind to skins like yours, and then
Put out the lives of better men?
I hate the chatter overhead,
And your jests which fall like lead
Where only golden things were said

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[4] Norman Vance, "The Ideal of Manliness", in Simon and Bradley, p.128.
[5] Gathorne-Hardy, p.200.
[6] Martin Green, Children of the Sun (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p.42.

By the men that are dead, the men that are dead.

"Intruders II"

We have accepted you, no doubt :
The Porter lets you in and out :
Himself the senior tutor blames
When he muddles up your names.
Already you have started games :
Harris allows you on the barge,
And takes your shorts and socks in charge,
And King, or else the ghost of King,
Damns your soi-distant footballing.
O, you'll not make, however keen,
The athletes men that are dead have been,
Nor ever win by taking thought
The motions that are born, not taught.
Not all your pains by field or river,
Your soreness or your sweat, shall ever
Give you bodies half as fair
As the broken bodies are,
The broken bodies glorified,
Of them that died, of them that died.[7]

Gathorne-Hardy's conclusion is an exemplary sacrifice of accuracy for the sake of glib phraseology. As has been shown, there were factors other than athleticism impinging on the relationship of sport and war during the First World War, and of the two recorded instances of troops going into attack dribbling a football at the Somme, neither has been proved to have any relationship whatsoever with the products of the public school system. Clearly, any post-war prognosis regarding the fate of athleticism must be more carefully evaluated.

Mack and Mangan both treat the subject of the fate of public school athleticism more cautiously and draw their conclusions from primary evidence from the post-bellum period. Mack provides a thorough account of the public school response to peace in his chapter "The Postwar Revolt", in which he shows that the Armistice proved a remarkable stimulus to public school novelists, who strove to decry, expose, endorse and/or glorify the educational system that had contributed so many of its spawn to the national war effort.[8] Mangan concurs that the

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[7] H.W.Garrod, Worms and Epitaphs (Oxford: Blackwell, 1919), p.20.
[8] Mack, chapter ten, pp.323-363.

Great War was indeed something of a divide in social, educational, political and economic terms and illustrates the responses of various leading figures from the six schools under his attention to the changing role of games and athleticism in the advancing years of the twentieth century.[9] One direct contemporary statement, however, comes from a review of Captain Webster's book, "Success in Athletics and How to Obtain It", in which the reviewer quotes this passage from the last chapter: "...it is felt that a new epoch of athleticism in Great Britain is about to commence - that an entirely new breed of athletes will arise or be recruited from the ranks of those who through four and a half years of war have learned the true meaning of discipline and the importance of close attention to the least little detail of instruction".[10] The reviewer comments, "Now we all feel something good must come after all this suffering and slaughter : the Briton has proved that he is possessed of true greatness; how can this greatness be turned to full account?" and continues to suggest that the ideal for which all should strive is that of the Greeks - "the all-round man, made up of mind, character and muscle, all developed to the utmost extent". How far this ambition was to be realised remains to be answered by another.

Within the bounds established by this study, however, certain observations can be made in response to the original hypotheses and questions posed. Its original intention was to broaden the base of the inquiry into the nature of the British perception of sport and war, moving away from the public schools themselves and investigating the matrix of literature that surrounded not only upper class response to the First World War, but that which related to popular education and the armed forces as well. Through an investigation of these three spheres, it has been shown that sport, team games and physical training became increasingly correlated with the image and reality of the nation at war between 1914 and 1918. Originally, in the nineteenth century, this interrelationship was justified on two separate counts which owed their division largely to the class structure in society - the upper classes, whose education was increasingly under the influence of athleticism, were believed to have their qualities of military leadership honed on the games fields of the public schools; the lower classes, who provided the rank and file of the British army, were gradually assigned physical training and drill both within the forces and via state education in order to make them fit enough to fulfill their social obligations. This essentially utilitarian use of sport in the mechanics of British society was to alter slowly over the last half of the nineteenth century, eventually reaching a situation prior to World War I where the original athletic elements of advantage traditionally accorded the public school warriors through team games were being assigned to officer and private alike.

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[9] Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, pp.207-219.
[10] Review, *London Mercury*, December 1919.

Several reasons for this dissemination of such military virtue via sport have been identified. Undoubtedly, the expanding education system was one vehicle by which the military assumptions regarding the value of sport were inculcated to a wider audience. There were, however, factors other than this diffusion of athleticism which played a part in placing sport firmly in the war consciousness of the British people. The expansion of popular sport allowed access to the moral and physical benefits of hardy exercise for a wide section of the population, which in turn did much to strengthen the popular stereotype of the athletic Englishman. By the time of the First World War, working class sport was an enormously popular tonic for participants and spectators alike. This allowed the British national character to be conveniently portrayed in sporting terms, permitting a blanket of athletic unity to be thrown across the nation. The manipulation of this manufactured image and its role in the propaganda process during the war has been related within the study to the pseudo-scientific influence of strains of social Darwinism. Finally, it is clear that twentieth century military theory held that modern wars were to be won not with new technology, but with fit, strong and disciplined troops, physically capable of carrying an enemy position whilst sustaining losses as they crossed the open fire zone. In order to develop the qualities necessary to accomplish such an arduous task, team games for both officers and their men were increasingly recommended by the army policy makers.

The factors discussed above were those which combined to make sport and war prominent in the British literature during the First World War. The major contribution of this study has been to display the underplayed, overlooked or simply unrecognised manifestations of sport and war during these long, bitter and costly years. In a number of areas it has sought to examine and analyse the use and abuse of the ideological strands asserting the relationship between British sport and modern warfare, and has illustrated how sporting rationale and imagery were used to sustain, develop and celebrate these ideological affinities even in the face of the disastrous nature of the war on the Western Front. It has shown that the acceptability of sport's role in British involvement in war was not confined to the elite circles of the public schools and their proteges, but was a commonly held maxim that commanded considerable attention from the wide range of written material available to the British reader. In the course of illustrating the extent of this permeation, attention was drawn to several instances in which sport was being artificially maintained in the forefront of the public eye during the war, and by which the progress and awful reality of the conflict were artificially enhanced by continual reference to the sporting nature of the fighting.

An examination of the early months of the war revealed, for instance, that the role of sport was a far from predictable aid to recruiting, but rather was the centre of an acrimonious dispute in which smouldering, class-oriented snobbery flung accusations of cowardice and disloyalty against those who watched and played professional soccer. In the midst of this controversy, military authorities had to deal with friendly games of soccer which were played between the German and English troops at the Front on Christmas Day - once again, a quite unexpected sporting apparition in war. Meanwhile, in the literature of the war, the image of the athletic 'Tommy' laughing his way contemptuously to victory over the servile and generally sub-human Hun was propagated and sustained in both the national press and the previously undetected athletic poetry of the war, both of which played their own part in the elevating of British sportsmanship to the status of a national weapon during the war. The targets of this attack were, however, the British population themselves, and attention has been given to the propagandist purpose behind such techniques. The image of the sporting soldier did not go entirely unchallenged - *The War Illustrated* published one story in which an excellent footballer could not keep his nerve in the trenches,[11] and a public schoolmaster commented in *The Times Educational Supplement* that the most courageous deeds of which he had heard were performed not by the athletes of his school, but by "rather quiet, retiring boys who attracted little notice when they were here"[12] - but such references were rare indeed, and the overwhelming impression of the wartime British athlete-soldier is positive and celebratory.

The intention throughout has been to portray the relationship between war and sport as depicted by British literature during the years of the Great War. So far as is possible, the evidence consulted has been allowed to present its own case to the reader, with authorial intervention supplying only analysis in an attempt to show *"wie es eigentlich gewesen ist"*.[13] Though accuracy and caution have been two constant watchwords in the research, it is perhaps fitting and deferential to those who experienced and survived those most turbulent times to allow one of them to conclude this study:

> Historians will long grow old and lean
> In writing commentaries on the war,
> Huge tomes of learning and of battle lore,
> What was, what well might, and what should have been;
> Poets will make fine phrases of Messines,
> Boys whisper tales of Ypres while old folk snore,
> Artists will paint the hell they never saw
> And dons explain what wars do verily mean.
>
> But no scribe's wit, no spirit's imagining,
> Can truly feel the things that we have felt,
> Or deal the blows that stoutly we have dealt,
> Or weep our tears, or laugh with us, or sing
> Our battle songs, or kneel as we have knelt
> With the high hope that makes each man a king.[14]

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[11] 17 February 1917, p.15.

[12] no.115, 28 June 1917, p.247.

[13] Ranke's task for the historian - to find out how it actually was - is cited in Barbara Tuchman, Practicing History (New York, Ballentine Books, 1982), p.18.

[14] Lieut. Lionel R.Abel Smith, "Reflexion", *The English Review*, vol.27 (September 1918), p.166.

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